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WANTON**

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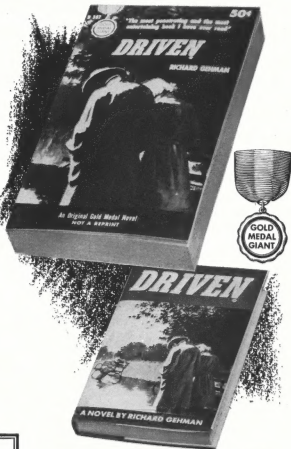
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JUNE, 1954

CAVALIER

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Way of a Wanton
by Richard S. Prather

Cover by LOU KIMMEL

VOL. 2 NO. 4

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THE BEAST IN KHAKI

The Japs were bad enough. Then Sgt. John Provoo turned on his fellow prisoners and before he was through, he had committed crimes never before charged to an American soldier

Capt. Richard Sakakida remembered that first day very well. No one who was on Corregidor the morning of

May 6, 1942 would be liable to forget it. The order for all American troops to lay down their arms had come through and the air was heavy with defeat in Malinta Tunnel where 12,000 American soldiers waited for their strutting Jap conquerors.

Near the wide mouth of Malinta a group of soldiers stood silently watching as the first group of Japanese officers started toward the tunnel.

Suddenly one of the soldiers broke away from the group and dashed headlong at the Japanese. The leading officer stopped and his hand went for the pistol at his side. But he didn't pull the weapon. Instead his hand froze on the butt and his face twisted in disbelief at what he saw.

The American soldier had come to a halt and was bowing deeply with proper Oriental deference. From his lips poured fluent Japanese informing his captors that he was a Buddhist priest. The dark brown eyes set above high cheek bones burned fanatically as he continued to say that he wished to be of service to the Japanese forces.

Back at the mouth of the tunnel the soldiers watched the scene with bewilderment. But Richard Sakakida, then an Air Force sergeant, was more worried than surprised. He had known John Provoo, the self-proclaimed Buddhist priest, before, and had reason to remember him well. Back in Manila Provoo had requested assignment as a Japanese interpreter for Army Intelligence. Sakakida had interviewed him and had recommended that the request be denied. Provoo, he reported, was unfamiliar with Japanese military terms; Sakakida spoke in glowing terms about the Japanese, and finally—there was a letter in the files that Provoo's brother had sent to the Army saying that he doubted his soldier-brother's loyalty. Now, as he watched Provoo talking to the Japanese, Sakakida knew he was in a jam. If Provoo turned on him. . . .

The two men met the next day at Japanese headquarters.

Provoo had already been accepted as an interpreter. The Japs were suspicious of Sakakida and acted as if they didn't believe the story he had told them—that he was a Hawaiian civilian working for the American Army. Sakakida waited for Provoo to swing the axe—but he didn't.

by Edward Ransal

Then the Japs told Sakakida that he too would act as an interpreter.

For the next month the two sergeants served as interpreters for the staff of General Tomoyaki Yamashita, who was later hanged as a war criminal. And through every waking minute of those 30 days, Sakakida lived in mortal terror, never knowing when Provoo might decide to expose him.

But Provoo was too busy playing the Master of Malinta to give his attention to Sakakida. Every day he paraded through the tunnel, pulling his illicit rank on his former friends and at the same time keeping alert for any information that would help his new friends. On one of his first tours of the tunnel he heard a GI curse him softly. Provoo stepped up to the soldier and drove a right smash to his jaw. There was no retaliation—Provoo was always well-guarded by Jap soldiers who were only too eager to use their rifle butts.

Now the Americans realized they had two enemies to fight in the tunnel—and that Provoo was equally as dangerous as the Japs. When he made a tour, he was quick to spot the slightest infraction of rules—and even quicker to report it to the Japs. The reports meant punishment for the unlucky offenders and extra prestige for Provoo.

During this time Provoo made no attempts to fool anyone into believing that he was acting under any kind of pressure. He confidently told one of the medical officers, Edward S. Kagy, that, "the American people well and thoroughly deserve the fate they'll soon meet—they soon will become slaves of the Japanese people, a superior race of people."

As the torturous days passed and the traitor's confidence grew, he began to devote all of his time to solidifying his position with the Japs. One morning he came upon Marine Sgt. Joe Freel sitting on the floor of the tunnel shining his boots. One of the Japanese guards leaned over and whispered something to Provoo. He turned to Freel and said, "He wants your boots. Give them to him!"

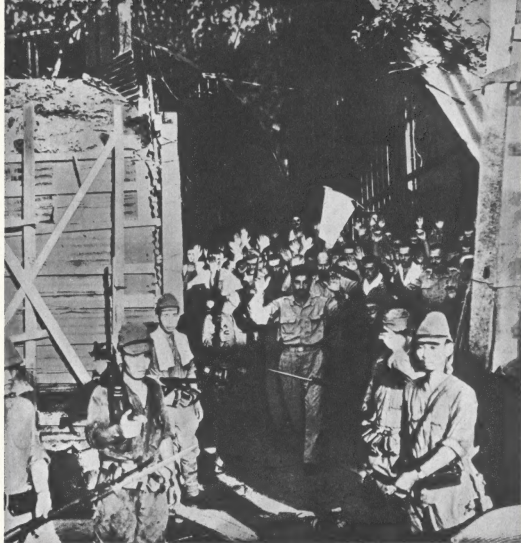
"Go to hell!" spit Freel.

Until S/Sgt. John David Provoo was convicted for treasonable acts committed while a prisoner of war, there had been no record of such a crime in America's annals. The wake of the Korean war may add new names to this black list. As CAVALIER goes to press, one soldier is under arrest awaiting investigation of charges that he killed two fellow captives in a Korean camp, while the others are charged with "unlawful dealings with the enemy."

Edward Ransal, the author, is a staff writer for *The New York Times*, who covered the trial in a *New York Federal Court*.

Provoo knocked the Marine down with his riding crop, then kicked and beat him into unconsciousness. When Freel was completely out, the traitor pulled off the boots and handed them to the grinning guard.

Not content with his daytime activities Provoo soon began to

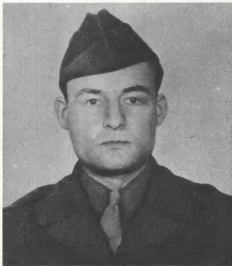


Corregidor fell to the Japanese on May 6, 1942 and on that day Sgt. John Provoo began his career of treachery.

Capt. Burton C. Thomson was one of the first American prisoners to stand up and defy Provoo. He paid for his courage with his life.



S/Sgt. John David Provoo, actor, bank clerk, Buddhist priest, soldier and finally—traitor. His acts of treason are unique in U. S. history.

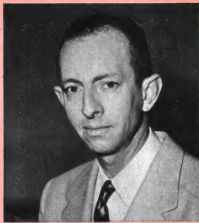




Everett R. Waldrum, an ex-Marine, came from Alpine, Texas to New York to testify about Capt. Thomson's murder.



Tough Col. Theodore Teague remembered how Provoo had tried to force him to turn our code over to the Japanese.



John Henry Farmer told how Provoo had attacked him after he spat at the sergeant for his anti-American statements.



Capt. Richard Sakakida flew in from the Far East to describe how Provoo made his first offer of assistance to Japanese officers.

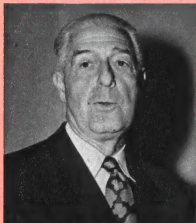
The Accusers



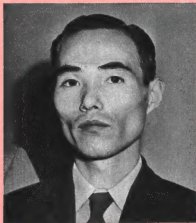
Sgt. Telles was told "I work for the Japanese" by Provoo; former officer Shoichi Yanase said Provoo offered his services.



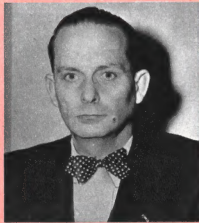
Cpl. Robert Brown testified Provoo had once boasted to him that he was "boss" and would plead insanity if ever tried.



Col. Louis Bowler said Provoo had apparent freedom of movement, was known as "The Master of Malinta Tunnel."



Convicted war criminal Seitaro Fujita was one of the guards who led Capt. Burton C. Thomson to his shocking death.



Dr. Edward S. Kagy of New Orleans, a medical officer on Corregidor, quoted treasonous remarks Provoo had made.

branch out and find new ways to please the Japs. He took over an entire lateral for his private quarters and here he launched big Scotch and saki parties for the Jap non-coms. Most of the rations used at these parties came from the depleted American mess and meant the beginning of a running feud between Provoo and Captain Burton C. Thomson, the mess officer. Thomson did everything possible to protect the short rations he had for his fellow-prisoners, but on several occasions Provoo by-passed him and got a mess sergeant to carry out his orders. He had the non-coms so completely buffaloed that at times he insisted they bake the cakes according to recipes he provided.

Impressed with Provoo's zeal, the Japs now gave him more important assignments. They sent him with three military police officers to obtain the American code from Colonel Theodore "Tiger" Teague, Corregidor's communication officer. Provoo was to be interpreter for the officers, but he took it on himself to advise Colonel Teague to give the Japs the information they wanted.

"To hell with that stuff," Teague barked angrily.

"If you take my advice," Provoo said, "you'll give them the code. If you don't they'll beat it out of you anyway. You know what that means."

"I didn't ask your advice and I don't intend to take it," Teague informed him. "The war isn't over yet and when it is, I'll try my best to have you brought to justice."

Provoo shrugged and left. So did the Japs. And Teague, a tough old soldier, never did reveal the code.

His failure to secure the information on the code didn't kill Provoo's rating with the Japs, but he decided to make up for the failure with a really big deal.

Just before the surrender to the Japs, American officers had dumped \$75,000,000 in silver into Malinta Bay. The purpose, of course, was to keep it out of Jap hands. Provoo heard about this one day while sneaking around in Malinta Tunnel and launched a plan that would get the silver into the same Jap hands.

The traitor's plot started with what appeared to be just another one of Provoo's frequent drinking parties. But there was definitely something different about this party. One of the guests was an American sergeant, James Palone, whom Provoo ordered to attend. There were four other guests—all Japanese sergeants.

The party started in friendly fashion and Provoo, with the help of some saki, soon put Palone at his ease. Until then Palone hadn't been able to figure out why Provoo had invited him, but when his guard went down, he found out in a hurry. The traitor grabbed him and barked, "Palone, that silver that was dumped into the bay—where is it?"

It took a couple of seconds for the question to penetrate. Then Palone shook his head.

Provoo didn't take the refusal like he had accepted Colonel Teague's. "Look, you lousy bastard," he roared at Palone. "You worked on the blueprints. Tell me where it is!"

Palone's answer was a quick curse.

Now Provoo changed his tactics. "Don't be a jerk, Palone," he said persuasively. "We could fish it out, split it and live like kings the rest of our lives."

This time Palone's answer was a roundhouse right. Provoo ducked under it, pounced on the weakened Palone and beat him until he dropped to the floor. But again Provoo was faced with frustration. Palone kept the secret and the Japs never were able to find the silver.

While Provoo was waging his private war of nerves, the Japs had launched their own campaign to break the will of the American prisoners on Corregidor. Thousands of soldiers taken to an abandoned air strip and forced to squat for hours in the broiling sun. Malnutrition had already sapped the strength of the men and this new ordeal finished many of them off. Morale went down to a new low around the island.

Right after this Provoo underwent a transformation—but

in appearance only. He shaved his head and donned the white robes of a Buddhist. This wasn't a new role for him. At the age of 12 he had become fascinated with Buddhist ceremonies in his native California and later after investigating the cult, he had become obsessed with the study of Buddhism. Then at 16 his interest was temporarily sidetracked when his brother got him a part in a soap opera.

Provoo, always a ham at heart, loved acting and radio work, but jobs began to get scarce and he was soon forced to take a job in a bank. While in the bank he formed an unusual attachment to a girl who worked there. But the romance could not fight the regrowth of his overwhelming desire to study Buddhism and in 1940 he sailed for Japan where he entered a Buddhist monastery near Tokyo. At the end of the year the American embassy ordered him home because of the threat of war.

A month after his return to the States, he enlisted in the Army. Then he married the girl from the bank. Their marriage lasted one day—long enough for Provoo to discover that he had no desire to carry out the normal marital functions of a husband. The girl divorced him and Provoo sailed for the Philippines—and, although he didn't know it, a second chance at being a Buddhist priest.

He played his new part on Malinta to the hilt and it was typical of him that he should have an audience when he prayed. At sundown each day he would force a Corporal Brown from the Medical Corps to accompany him to the top of Malinta, the highest point on the island. Here, Provoo, garbed in Buddhist robes, would chant prayers while Brown watched.

On one of these trips Brown asked Provoo what he intended doing if America won the war. Provoo didn't even stop to think—he'd had the answer to that question worked out long before. "I will plead insanity," he said immediately.

The renewed devotion to Buddhism had changed Provoo's looks, but he soon proved that it hadn't changed his insides. When the news came around that an important Jap marshal was about to make an inspection of the island, Provoo requested permission to throw a party for the visitor. General Yamashita told him to go ahead and added ominously that he'd better make it a good one.

Provoo went straight to the mess hall and told Captain Thomson what he wanted for the Jap party. Thomson refused to hand the things over. "You know we're short of rations," he said. "I can't spare them for the Japs. We need all the food I can get for our boys."

"I'm ordering you to give me what I asked for," Provoo screamed.

Thomson blew his stack at this. "Get out of here, you lousy bastard," he roared, "before I break you in two."

Provoo started to leave, then stopped at the entrance and yelled back. "I'll show you who's boss here."

The traitor didn't waste any time. He ran back to Jap headquarters and reported that Captain Thomson had been "uncooperative, anti-Japanese" and "was a threat to the internal security of Corregidor." And, he added, Thomson's presence might lead to an unfortunate incident when the marshal made his inspection.

Thomson was immediately brought up in front of the Japanese unit commander. The verdict came quickly. He was to be executed.

Sergeant Fujita and Lt. Nakagawa, who were to carry out the sentence, piled Thomson into a jeep and drove him to the deserted end of the air strip. Then Thomson's hands were tied behind him and he was forced to kneel down. Nakagawa took his pistol out and shot the American through the back of the head. As Thomson lay writhing on the ground, Fujita asked for and received permission to finish off the job. Another shot in the head took care of that.

When Fujita returned to headquarters, Provoo asked him about Thomson. Fujita told what had happened and Provoo said, "Very well, if there are [Continued on page 41]

SOLVED: The MYSTERY of

A CAVALIER FIRST: The dramatic story of what happened to the last great western outlaw after his flight to South America



BUTCH CASSIDY'S END

Butch Cassidy's exploits as leader of the Wild Bunch and ruler of Robbers' Roost are a well-known chapter in the history of our western outlaws. A specialist in train robberies and bank holdups, Butch was active in the United States until 1901. So far, his story always ended with his reported flight to Argentina.

Now, at last, the mystery of the final years of his adventurous life has been solved. James D. Horan, one of Cassidy's biographers, author of *Desperate Men* and other books, tracked down eyewitnesses to Butch Cassidy's later escapades, set against the towering Andes in place of the rugged Rockies. CAVALIER is proud to present this remarkable story.

—The Editors

There was snow in the air, and the morning was dark and bitter. Delivery horses slipped and floundered on the icy streets of Manhattan; drivers cursed and thought of coffee and rum. Conversation in the taverns and coffee houses centered around the remarkable antics of a man named Marconi who had recently signalled the letter "S" across the Atlantic; and whether or not a man named Roosevelt would be a good president.

On this morning of February 17, 1902, a carriage pulled up before Mrs. Evelyn Taylor's boarding house on East 12th Street, New York. Two men jumped down and turned to assist a woman to the icy pavement.

One of the men was slim and had dark sideburns. The other, of medium height, had a ruddy, wind-burned face and a thin mustache. Both wore derbies and overcoats with beaver-lined collars.

by James D. Horan

The woman was about 27, a striking beauty with hair the color of copper and a full sensual mouth. She was fashionably dressed, but a thoughtful observer would have noticed something peculiar about her. In a period when both farm and city women affected pale coloring, she was heavily tanned.

"Put the baggage down," one of the men said to the hack driver. "By heavens, this is a cold town!"

He went to Mrs. Taylor's door and rang. When she answered, he introduced himself.

"I'm Jim Ryan, ma'am," he said. "My friends are Mr. and Mrs. Harry D. Place. We're from Wyoming to sell some cattle interests to a beef company here in New York. The hack driver suggested your residence. . . ."

Mrs. Taylor liked Mr. Ryan. He had a soft, pleasant voice, excellent manners and a fine, gentle smile. His derby was in his hand. Obviously, thought Mrs.

Taylor, this man Ryan would make a desirable border. "Please come in," she said. "Bring your things. I'm sure I can put you up."

Ryan and the Places followed her to the reception room. Mrs. Taylor observed that these people certainly were prosperous. Rich cattle folks, by all indications.

"Have you anything looking on the street, ma'am?" Ryan asked. "You see, we're not used to the city and we'd sort of like to look at people."

Mrs. Taylor could arrange three front rooms, the central one to serve as a living room. Would \$15 a week be too much?

"We're happy to pay whatever you wish," Ryan said.

When the door shut behind the landlady, the handsome Ryan grinned at the equally handsome Places.

"A nice establishment," he observed. "Let's get established."

He removed his coat and unbuckled a gun belt. Place did the same, hanging his belt and gun over the foot of the brass bed.

"Take off your hardware, too," Ryan said to the woman.

"You won't need it here, Etta."

Etta nodded and slipped off her fur coat. The men watched approvingly. She was slender, with full breasts and a fashionably slim waist. Her gown was of red velvet.

Opening several buttons at the top of her dress, she drew out a small single-shot pistol in a tiny chamois holster. The holster had been pinned to her undergarments.

"Are we going to visit the jeweler today, Butch?" she asked Ryan.

"Might as well, Butch," Place said. "She'll dog us until we do."

So they got directions to Tiffany's, where they bought Etta an expensive gold watch.

Then for the next three days, the trio toured New York and attended to their "cattle business." They ate at Rector's, enjoyed the appearance of the Flatiron Building, and took in several shows. They even had a photograph taken at De-Young's on Broadway. At all times, Mrs. Taylor noted, they conducted themselves in exemplary fashion.

At breakfast, on the morning of the 20th, Ryan made Mrs. Taylor quite unhappy.

"It's a matter of business," he told her. "We have to leave for the Argentine at once. Cattle, you know. We'll go today on the *Soldier Prince*."

They left at two that afternoon, after paying Mrs. Taylor an extra \$10. Their destination was Buenos Aires.

Some weeks later, Mrs. Taylor's doorbell rang and she found herself confronted by a young man with coal black hair and a swarthy face. He took an envelope from his pocket and drew out a picture.

"Have you ever seen these men before, ma'am?"

Mrs. Taylor gasped. "Why, of course," she said. She pointed to one of the figures. "That's Mr. Ryan and the other gentleman is Mr. Place. They left here on the twentieth of last month with Mr. Place's wife. But who are you?"

The young man took out a card. "I'm a detective for Pinkerton's Detective Agency. Frank DiMaio is the name. Do you know where these people were going, ma'am?"

"South America. Argentine. Tell me, are these people criminals?"

DiMaio nodded. "Your man, Ryan, is really Butch Cassidy, the most wanted man in the West. Place is Harry Longabaugh, also known as the Sundance Kid. We don't know about the woman. . . ."

Mrs. Taylor was shocked. That nice Mr. Ryan an outlaw! And handsome Mr. Place! And that lovely girl with the bright hair!

To the Pinkerton Agency, however, there was nothing surprising about the escapades of Butch Cassidy, Longabaugh and the mysterious Etta. The detectives expected the worst and were seldom disappointed. For years, the Pinks had hunted Cassidy from New Mexico to the Cana-

dian border. And for years Cassidy had managed to keep his freedom.

Butch, until 1901, had led a veritable army of outlaws whose headquarters were Hole-in-the-Wall, Star Valley, Brown's Hole and Robbers' Roost—way stations in a bandit trail leading from Wyoming to New Mexico. Train and bank robberies were specialties of the gang. The outfit was known as the Wild Bunch; among its members it numbered such hard riding, fast-shooting individuals as the McCarthy brothers, Matt Warner, Harvey and Lonnie Logan, Longabaugh, Ley, Black Jack Ketchum and many others.

Matt Warner went straight; most of the others were killed or hanged or imprisoned by 1901. Cassidy and Longabaugh, realizing their time was short, fled the West and, as already narrated, went to South America.

Here the story usually ends.

But here this story really begins.

Much of it comes from Percy Seibert who wears most of Chile's decorations and was a pioneer on the Bolivian frontier. Seibert, who was once Butch's boss, was probably the only man Cassidy ever trusted.

I had the good fortune of being visited recently by Seibert. He looked me up because I had mentioned his name in my biography of Butch Cassidy. During the several talks we had he revealed for the first time details of the South American saga of Butch, Longabaugh and Etta Place.

Their adventures below the equator began in March 1902. Upon arrival in Buenos Aires, Butch went to the London and River Plate Bank—but not for his usual purpose. He wanted to make a deposit of \$12,000. He also wanted to know about the bank's resources.

"I'm rather afraid of banks," he announced.

The next move was to file an application at the Argentina Land Office for "the right to buy land and improve it." Since Argentina was eagerly welcoming settlers, the application was approved and the trio were assigned a large section at Cholilo in the Province of Chubut. This area is approximately 800 air miles south of Buenos Aires.

It is not known whether Butch and his companions travelled by land or by sea to Puerto Madryn, a main Chubut seaport. Logic suggests a sea voyage, since such a route would be more direct.

Whatever the case, the adventurers reached Puerto Madryn and purchased mules for the journey to their holding in the interior. For part of the distance, they followed the lowlands flanking the Rio Chubut. The land, as they entered the interior, bore the look of the home ranges—high and generally flat as it mounted toward the Andes. Except for the mule train, which transported the goods necessary to establish the holding, the expedition was one familiar to men born to the saddle, the night fire, the bed roll and the blazing stars.

What Etta thought of it all is an open question, but it is logical to assume that the velvet-gowned beauty of Mrs. Taylor's boarding house must have spoken sharply about the change in her fortunes. One can visualize her at the fire, frying pan in hand, her face glowing from the heat, her words glowing with an inner fire born out of saddle weariness.

The holding was reached, help was hired, cattle were purchased. Etta settled in the crude ranch house; and the business of ranching began. Long days in the saddle for Cassidy and Longabaugh; lonely days for Etta, who busied herself with the work of ranch cooking and housekeeping.

Unknown to the trio, however, was the fact that DiMaio had arrived in Buenos Aires. He found the manager of the bank in which Butch had deposited funds and shocked him by identifying the recent new depositor as one of America's leading outlaws. He sent back a progress report to New York. Robert Pinkerton's answer was brief: "Find Cassidy, Longabaugh and the woman."

DiMaio conferred with government officials who looked at the map and shrugged. As in Wyoming, nature was on

Cassidy's side: the season for travel in Chubut was bad, the land was wild, officials were not available to assist in an arrest.

I have talked to DiMaio recently—he lives today in Wilmington, Delaware. It was a frustrating experience not being able to follow his quarry, he told me, but with Pinkerton's approval he did the next best thing. He had thousands of wanted posters distributed to seaports along the South American coasts; to police officers and shipping companies. DiMaio, worked day and night distributing these posters—sometimes traveling on mules to barely-accessible parts of Argentina.

No one knows what Cassidy's plans were when he settled at the interior ranch. Seibert believes he was really trying to go straight. DiMaio says, "He was up to no good. He was just looking over the country for soft spots where he could carry on his trade of robbery."

Six of one, and half a dozen of the other. From his past performance back home it is known, however, that Butch had made several attempts at honest work. As "Jim Lowe," he had served William French with competence on the WS ranch in New Mexico.

On another occasion, Butch had appealed to Judge Orlando Powers of Utah for amnesty. The official turned him down. Butch then appealed to the governor, and was again turned down. The Union Pacific conceived the brilliant idea of hiring Cassidy as express guard; in the process of negotiations, however, Butch held up a train. The UP changed its mind.

The Seibert version of Cassidy's South American intentions is excellent and doubtless true. So, paradoxically, is the DiMaio opinion. The paradox emerges from the fact that the incredible Cassidy was both good and bad, honorable and dishonorable, a cowhand and a man with inclinations toward city fashions; a thief and a gentleman, a Robin Hood and an outright bandit, a good-for-nothing whose genius, if properly applied, might have been good for a great deal.

Also, Cassidy was a damned fine figure of a man. So was Longabaugh. And that's what started the trouble in South America.

Longabaugh, the Sundance Kid, was a man with an eye for women—an ailment from which Butch never suffered. Etta wasn't enough for the Kid; his eye wandered toward the person of a nearby rancher's wife. She spoke Spanish, a language Longabaugh (and Cassidy) knew from New Mexico days.

Longabaugh would drop by for a drink of water.

"Throw down the box," Butch commanded and fired a shot over the head of the "mozo" who put up no resistance.

"Hola!" he would say. "Como esta usted?"

And the beautiful girl would reply: "Estoy bien. Come in out of the sun and relax."

The drink of water became a glass of wine. The glass of wine was an introduction to romance. And then, of course, the inevitable happened. The rancher caught his wife in a compromising situation with Longabaugh.

The Sundance Kid was quick as a snake's tongue with a six-shooter. The two shots he fired could have been covered by a silver dollar above the heart of the rancher. In pants, but without shirt or boots, Longabaugh headed for the ranch. Cassidy listened to the story, then shrugged at Etta.

The girl, believed to be a former Texas school teacher, took the news quietly. By this time, her experience with outlaws was large enough for anything. "She was one hell of a housekeeper," Cassidy told Seibert, "but a tramp at heart."

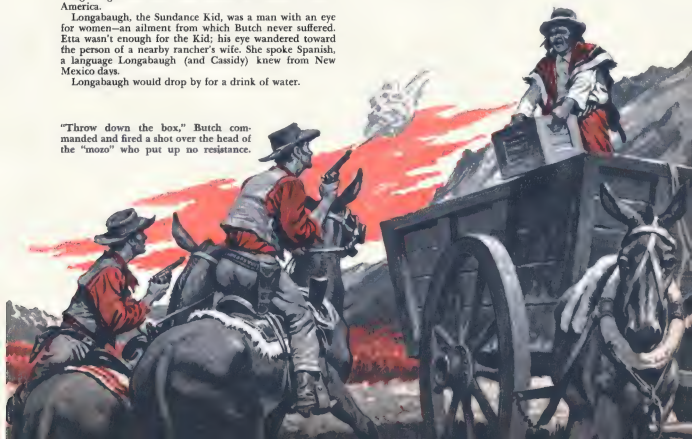
"What do we do now?" she asked Butch, scorning the Sundance Kid.

"We move," said Cassidy.

"And our stake?"

"We move. I'm tired of smelling cows, anyhow."

But Cassidy smelled cows for some time to come. Details are obscure. The events themselves sound impossible. But somehow Butch and the Kid moved cattle all the way from Chubut in Argentina to La Paz, Bolivia. The route must have been inland, for a crossing of the Andes with a large herd is a virtual impossibility. But an inland route through Rio Negro, La Pampa, San Luis, and the Gran Chaco region is equally impossible. The only solution to the mystery lies in the fact that both Cassidy and Longabaugh were remarkable cowhands. For years, they had ranged as bandits and cowpokes over thousands of miles of rough North American territory. If any two men could drive cattle from Chubut to Bolivia, they would be the ones. Captain French, of New Mexico, has written: "... Truly the way those men handled stock was a marvel. Another thing about them was that ... they were most decorous. There [Continued on page 46]





We Were Caught in an *ICE TRAP*

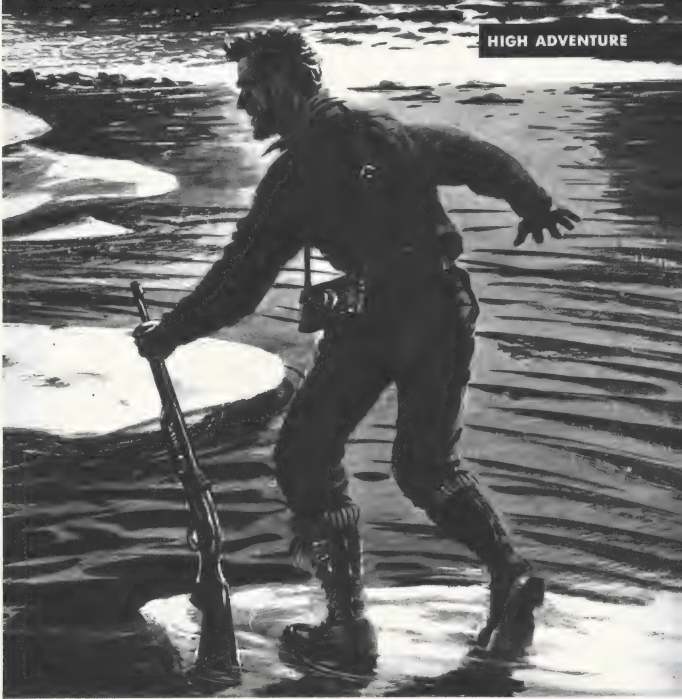
by Dr. J. P. Moody

**We thought we'd reach shore,
leaping from floe to floe.
Then came the real shock:
Our entire field was an
island, drifting out to sea**

Tuga him say no dog food. Him say dogs hungry," Sheeniktook informed me. "I say we not go hunt rocks, today. We hunt seal. Rocks wait long time, dogs no wait. They weak, like this." He dropped his head and let his arms hang limp to show how the dogs felt.

Sheeniktook had come into the igloo to awake me and to tell me about our diminishing supplies. We had spent five tiring days prospecting for ore, moving from cove to cove along the edge of the ice fields. There was no doubt that we needed food for the dogs, so I told my two guides that we'd spend the day hunting for seal rather than moving on to the next cove.

I walked up to the bluff beneath which we had camped.



and looked out toward the sea. The sun had not climbed above the horizon yet, but the reflected light provided clear vision. Land-locked ice stretched out for about two miles, then came the closely packed drift ice which was moving in with the tide. The water glimmered grayish-blue in the distance and in the leads between the big ice pans. There had been a great deal of rumbling and movement in the ice field for the past few days. Hummocks and pressure ridges had been building up into huge peaked formations. It was breaking-up time.

So far, we had been lucky, maneuvering our canoe along the floe edge of land-locked ice while the drifting field moved out to sea with the tide. When the tide came back

The arctic is one of the few remaining frontiers that can legitimately be called "unexplored." When men enter and return from this wild, cruel country, they generally have hair-raising adventures to relate. Dr. Joseph P. Moody is one such man. After receiving his M. D. he became a medical health officer for the Canadian Government. For three and a half years he lived in Canada's east arctic, doctor to some 2,000 people living in a 600,000 square-mile area of wind-swept ice. "We Were Caught in an ICE TRAP" is a true account of one of the unexpected adventures of Dr. Moody, who, when he wasn't busy with his syringe, was playing alternate roles of explorer, geologist and photographer-reporter.



in, we took the boat out of the water and continued by sled. Each night we had camped far in on solid ice, or on the shore. The frequent rumblings and movement meant we wouldn't be able to trust the ice much longer.

After studying the ice field for several minutes, I realized that if we wanted to hunt we'd have to do it on foot. It would be impossible to maneuver the canoe through the moving ice without being crushed.

After breakfast we hooked up the dogs and sled and moved on to the floe edge. There I freed myself from the heavy equipment and cumbersome Caribou parka I was wearing. I took my camera, my gun, cigarettes and some chocolate. For a while we studied the movement of the ice. It was still coming in and looked as though it would be safe for a few hours till the tide changed.

We split up. Tuga went one way and Sheeniktook and I went the other. It's tricky to walk in the ice fields, especially during breaking-up time. Most of the ice is still solid but you find occasional stretches that are mushy and full of holes. When the field is moving in toward shore, the leads are narrow, and there are many cracks and small channels that are filled with slush from snow and ground-up ice. Those are difficult to see. You have to test every foot of ice with a stick as you walk.

Sheeniktook and I wandered around for hours without finding a sign of life. We came across several seal holes—and nearly fell into some of them—but no seals. Finally, we reached the last of the big ice floats. Beyond them were only small scraps and pieces of ice. But the open water meant that we'd probably spot some of the animals. And so it was. When we climbed a ridge we saw a big square-flipper seal sunning himself no more than five feet below us. Slowly, I raised my rifle and fired a shot. The animal tensed for an instant, then went limp. He must have weighed about 600 pounds. Sheeniktook was delighted. Immediately we began debating about how we'd get the monster back to the sled. Sheeniktook finally decided that it would be best to go back, get the dogs and let them drag the animal in.

Before leaving, Sheeniktook cut a few pieces out of the seal to give to the dogs; then he took off his parka and threw it over the animal to prevent its skin from drying out. "Me back soon with dogs," he said, "you stay here so I can find seal." With this he took off across the ice and was soon out of view.

I sat down on the dead animal and looked out over the sea. The grayness had gone, the sun shone brightly and made the sea deep blue. The ice pans had different colors depending on how the light hit them. Some were a soft pink with light purple high spots; others were sea green and there were many hues of blue. When I closed my eyes halfway and looked through my lashes, it seemed as if I

were witnessing some gigantic exhibition of fireworks.

Here I was, Joe Moody, 1,000 miles away from the nearest city, sitting on an ice pan in the middle of the sea. Under me was a freshly killed seal and all around me was the incredible arctic. "Doctor Moody," I told myself, "you've come a long way. For more than three years you've been the doctor of two thousand people who live in a six-hundred-thousand square-mile section of the immense east arctic. You've amputated, delivered, injected and pulled teeth; you've stopped epidemics and made the kind of history no one knows about. You haven't done so badly. Moody, if you go on this way you may get somewhere yet." But how I doubted these thoughts by nightfall.

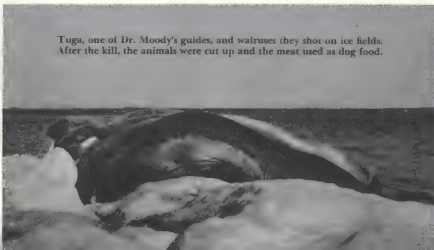
I had been sitting there dreaming, for I don't know how long, when I began to wonder what had happened to Sheeniktook. He should have been back much sooner. Suddenly I sat up. I had felt something. I felt it again. It was movement, not just small movement, but something big all around me. I looked, and held my breath. . . .

I was drifting out to sea. Slowly but unmistakably the ice pan I was sitting on was moving away from the shore. And that shore was more than 10 miles away. The tide had changed and all the loose ice was moving out with it.

I jumped up. Panic seized me. Half running I headed toward shore, following the tracks that Sheeniktook had left on the mushy surface of the ice. I had to move fast. If I failed to get back to land-locked ice soon, I'd be carried out, 20 maybe 30 miles. If my ice pan went too far it might get caught in other currents and not move back to the shore with the next tide. It would just float around in open water and slowly melt away or be ground up by other bergs and floats.

Running faster now, I was concentrating on Sheeniktook's mushy trail. Suddenly I stopped. The next footprint was 10 feet away, across a gaping lead of clear blue water. I looked around desperately. A few hundred yards to the left my float seemed to touch another. I hurried and jumped across a small gap, then I cut back to find Sheeniktook's tracks again. But they did not seem to be on this ice pan. Probably the next. I leaped again. There they were. I started following them. I was not taking precautions now but was moving as quickly as I could, picking my way from hummock to hummock, around peaks and pressure ridges, across yawning cracks. Luckily the field was still staying pretty much together. I continued jumping across leads, sometimes moving from one pan to another where they were pushed together. I lost and recovered the tracks time and again. Where I saw them, I followed them; when I lost them I guessed my direction and roamed until I crossed them again.

I climbed a high ridge and looked around. Surely, Sheeniktook and Tuga must have noticed that the ice was moving. They should be coming out to get me. But I couldn't see them. No black spots moving across the ice.



Tuga, one of Dr. Moody's guides, and walruses they shot on ice fields. After the kill, the animals were cut up and the meat used as dog food.

Where could they be? Had I already lost direction? Maybe Sheeniktook's footprints were leading me away—maybe the whole field had turned with the tide and I was moving south toward more open water. I took out my compass and checked my direction. No, I was still all right.

Suddenly an off-shore wind came up. It wasn't strong, but it was enough to help push the ice pans out to sea. I jumped off the hummock I had been standing on, and the moment I jumped, I knew I shouldn't have. When I landed, my right leg went through to the knee. I quickly threw myself forward on the ice and crawled away. My leg had plunged into a seal hole that had filled up with slish and snow, and it was soaked. Never mind, I told myself. You've got to reach shore.

I stumbled on, checking my compass every few minutes. Then, after I'd climbed to the top of a high float, I saw my two guides. They were standing on a high ridge about two miles away. I waved, and they waved back. They had the dogs with them and were walking back and forth nervously. I sat down for a moment, expecting that they would come for me. But they didn't. They simply kept running back and forth along the ridge. I couldn't figure it out. I started walking again, slower now, because I knew I was on the right track. But when I finally got close to them, I saw what had kept them from coming after me.

The ice pan I was standing on was a good 30 feet away from their ridge. Those 30 feet were taken up by open water. Should I swim? Could I swim? Would a sudden change in the currents bring the ice blocks together and crush me? But Sheeniktook knew what to do. "Wait," he shouted, and then he climbed down and moved along the narrow ledge of his ice pan to a place where another, smaller float was hugging it. He had a tent pole in his hand. Carefully, he stepped on the small hunk of ice, maybe 10 feet across, and pushed off with his pole. He pushed hard and it was fortunate, because when he lowered his pole into the water it wouldn't touch bottom.

Suddenly the thought occurred to me—maybe they're not on land-locked ice. But I dismissed the possibility. Slowly, Sheeniktook's precarious little island drifted toward me. He moved as close to the edge as he could, then reached out with the pole. I grabbed it and pulled him in. When I stepped onto it, the block nearly capsized. Sheeniktook jumped quickly to the other end and kept us in balance. We pushed off again and wobbled back to the other side of the widening gap where Tuga received us. I was furious.

"Why didn't you come and get me? Why didn't you fire your gun to warn me? You could have come across like we did now. What the devil is the matter with you fellows? I could have been lost for good."

They looked hurt. Sheeniktook explained, "Tuga say I not go, I say Tuga not go, too dangerous. So we stay."

"So, you just deserted me? You are brave like the women who chew the skins to make your boots!" This really hurt them. "Well, we'd better get back to the komatik and make camp," I said. But I was in for another surprise.

The sun was already disappearing in a haze of ordandy. It would soon be dark. We took course for the shore. Our progress was slow because Tuga had to go ahead of the dogs to test the ice. We walked 20 minutes, then Tuga stopped with a grunt. Before us stretched an open space of lapping blue water, 100 feet wide.

It came back to me: they had not been on land-locked ice. In a way it was amusing. My two faithful friends who had been so concerned about each other's safety had not been safe themselves. All the time they stood deliberating, they were moving out to sea, following in my wake. But the amusing side of our situation ceased to be amusing when I realized there was absolutely no chance of getting across. And the channel was widening every minute.

"We better go get seal," Tuga said. "Maybe need food."

I tried to close my mind against what we were in for. We might be stranded on the hazardous ice for days. Our pan was a big one and it moved slowly, but there was no guarantee that it would come back to shore again. We seemed to be drifting out diagonally, and we might very well be caught in another current. If the wind blew stronger, or if a storm should come up tomorrow, we could be blown out for several miles and never come back. Our float would then slowly crumble up. But we'd die from exposure first. More than a couple of nights with temperatures of 25 or 30 below would certainly finish us off.

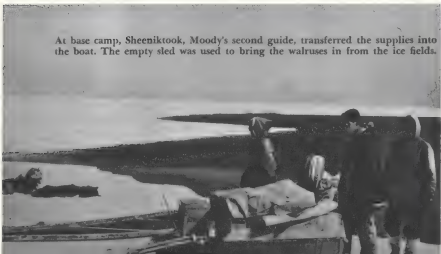
The Eskimos walked away to see if they could reach the seal; but they soon came back saying that we were completely surrounded by water. I looked at my compass. We were still drifting out in the same direction. The sun had sunk away and it was getting very cold. The wind grew stronger, to a force of about five miles an hour. If it got any stronger, we'd be dead by morning.

Tuga was the only one who was thickly clothed. I'd left my heavy outer wear at the komatik when we set out for the hunt, and Sheeniktook's parka was still draped over the dead seal. He stamped around trying to keep warm. I suddenly realized that my leg was numb. The wet boot and the Caribou skin legging were frozen stiff. I quickly stripped them off, tore a piece off my shirt and wrapped that around my icy foot. Then I put the boot on again.

Sheeniktook told me to follow his example and keep running around. He had drawn a circle where he had tested the ice and found it solid. I began running back and forth within the circle, making sure that I didn't overstep the borderline.

Tuga seemed little concerned about us. He looked quite comfortable in his parka. He had built up a shelter of ice blocks and had folded himself up within. He was snoring loudly. Sheeniktook and I started [Continued on page 48]

At base camp, Sheeniktook, Moody's second guide, transferred the supplies into the boat. The empty sled was used to bring the walrus in from the ice fields.





The .32-caliber squeezer "palm gun," made in the 1880's was used around Chicago by gangsters and gamblers. It fires seven shots.

Gadget Guns Mean Murder



The three top guns are derringers, and come from the Colt line. Odd derringer is duplicate of one that shot Lincoln.


Most of the thousands of firearms that have been invented in the last 500 years are more gadgets than guns. Many of them were invented to get around somebody else's patent. But many more were new.

Pistols have been combined with keys, daggers, battle axes, clubs, pocket knives, knuckle dusters and flashlights. They have been made to be concealed in the pocket, in a coat sleeve, in the top of a boot, in a woman's muff, in the palm of the hand, in the hilt of a sword and in canes. Guns have been designed to kill the man who opened a door, to produce rain in Switzerland, to harpoon fish, to knock a man out with no injury to him, and even to shoot around a corner.

Early users of firearms had plenty of troubles, and the greatest of these was the time it took to reload. If a man was shooting one of these gadget pistols, he was usually shooting at close range, and sometimes his life hung on the shot. He wanted a repeating gun and, if he couldn't have that, he wanted one that was also a dagger, a club or an ax. Often he preferred a sharp blade as his real weapon and the pistol was merely an added gadget.

One such, a museum piece made in Europe, is a long knife with a flintlock pistol in its chased metal handle. During the flintlock period, many men carried swords with a pistol barrel extending through the guard and pointing alongside the blade. A sword with a pistol made after the percussion cap came into use shows a different notion. The pistol is almost completely concealed. The barrel runs through the handle of the sword and points to the rear, so a man could shoot when he surrendered his sword hilt first.

Samuel Colt had one model revolver made with a dagger, but he never put it in production. The dagger was a poor selling point and Colt was a salesman. His story was that a man who carried a Colt revolver had five or six shots ready



In use about 1910, this German, .25-caliber pistol has four barrels. After first shot is fired, second barrel jumps up into position.

And most of them are the deadliest, ugliest, smallest killers that mind and hand could create

by Lucian Cary

to fire and didn't need a knife. If the customer wanted more shots, Colt would sell him a second revolver for his other hand or a spare cylinder that could be carried loaded and capped. But the idea of fitting a gun with a blade, or making it so it could be used as an aid to the fist, has never died. Even today military men insist that an infantry rifle must have a bayonet.

Just after the Civil War, an American named Reid patented a combination seven-shooter and knuckle duster that he called "My Friend." The cartridges are in a cylinder, like the cylinder of a revolver, except that there is no separate barrel, and the brass handle has a hole through it big enough to stick a thumb through. He sold so many of these guns that "My Friends" are still fairly common, even though most owners dropped theirs in the river long ago to avoid being jailed for carrying concealed weapons.

The French made a wonderful combination which includes a cylinder full of cartridges, a folding handle that is also a set of brass knuckles, and a folding dagger. But the most absurd gadget gun I've ever seen is an American .22 pistol that looks as if it had three barrels, one above the other. The middle barrel houses a small dagger.

One of the early attempts to get fire-power was a pistol called a "duck foot." This had, say, four barrels mounted side by side but fanning out at a slight angle to each other. The flintlock had a large box for priming powder with a hole in the bottom to each barrel. It took a man of nerve to fire one since all the barrels went off at once.

A scheme that bobs up over and over again in the history of firearms is that of putting two or more charges in one barrel and firing them in succession. Sometimes all the charges went off at once.



German Kolibri, 3-mm automatic is designed to hit sensitive spots at close range. Compare it with .45 cartridge.



A flick of the fingers makes this Italian knife a deadly percussion pistol. Primarily a defense weapon, it was used during the late 19th century.



This rim-fire Frank Wesson double-barreled deringer came with built-in dagger. A .41-caliber model, it was used in U. S. throughout the 1860's.



The swing to automatic pistols in the 1860's brought multi-barreled guns like this one into existence. It is a .30-caliber Marston and fires from three barrels.

Another knife gun, also fired with a percussion cap, sports an ivory jacket. This model was first made and used by the British around the 1850's.



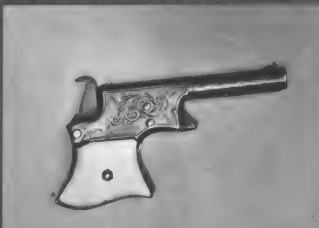
One such gun was a percussion revolver with two hammers. The cylinder had five chambers and each chamber was loaded with two charges, one behind the other. The first pull of the trigger fired the front charge in one chamber with the right-hand hammer. The second pull of the trigger fired the rear charge in the same chamber with the left-handed hammer.

The harmonica pistols made in Europe probably worked better, though it is hard to imagine hitting anything with one at a range of more than a few feet. The harmonica had as many as 10 barrels bored side by side in one wide, flat piece of steel. Every time you pulled the trigger, the bank of barrels moved over one notch, bringing another barrel with a fresh cartridge in line with the hammer.

Men tried again and again to make flintlock revolvers that were safe to fire. An American named Elisha Collier built some a few years before the percussion cap was perfected. They were beautifully made. But they weren't safe. No safe revolver could be made until the percussion cap did away with the necessity for loose priming powder.

The traditional revolver is an arm with a revolving cylinder that contains the separate charges. This is not the true revolver of today. Many early inventors tried what had better be called a turret. This was a thick, round disc of steel with holes in its circumference for the charges of powder and ball. The turret was sometimes made to revolve

Strictly in the ladies' class is this pearl-handled, ornately designed .22-caliber muff pistol. The words "For Mattie" are engraved on the casing.





Even during World War II, some Army officers preferred this 1910, .41-caliber derringer made by Remington. It is a double-barreled pistol.



Small but lethal, this four-barreled Sharps and Hawkins gun, of 1860 vintage, fired .30-caliber bullets. A revolving firing pin served all four barrels.

in a horizontal plane and sometimes in a vertical plane. One obvious disadvantage of this system is that one of the chambers is always pointed at the man firing the gun. If this chamber is accidentally fired, as it is likely to be by the fire igniting the charge going into the barrel, the shooter is pretty certain to be hit. Some inventors used a special breech to protect the shooter but others seem to have thought nothing of his safety. The turret idea lasted a long time. The Chicago palm pistol, made in the 80's and 90's, used the vertical turret design with rim-fire cartridges.

Samuel Colt's patent of 1836 on a percussion revolver discouraged other inventors. It sewed up the revolver market until the patent ran out in 1857. Since they couldn't design proper revolvers without infringing Colt's patent, men worked on single-shot pistols, repeating pistols, and pepper boxes.

A pepper box is a pistol with many barrels. It isn't a true revolver since it doesn't have a single barrel with a revolving cylinder containing the charges of powder and lead. It does have a number of complete barrels revolving around an axis. In 1845, Ethan Allen patented a double-action pepper box that fired every time you pulled the trigger until you had used up all six charges. This was something no Colt revolver [Continued on page 45]



Kupertus designed this eight-barreled derringer which fired .22-caliber bullets and could easily kill a man at close range. It also came out around 1860.

The French 8mm Calois "palm gun" was used during the gay nineties. It is fired by squeezing the sliding action into the square stock.



This .41-caliber rim-fire Colt derringer appeared in 1870 and was used until 1900. A single-barreled gun, it outlasted many of the multi-barreled pistols.





There was a deep silence as the ancient held the steaming bowl to me, "Drink!" he said. "What you fear?" the witch snarled.

I Caught a Witch

They were a primitive
lot, these "Fang" people.
But I didn't realize just
how primitive, until I
tangled with their haughty,
female "medicine man"
who cleverly arranged
for my death by poison

by Brian O'Brien

Illustrated by Borye Phillips

As a matter of fact she almost caught me! My life hung, for a long time, in a balance that was broken by the one thing against which this lady could not prevail.

I was trying to establish a trade station on the Campo River, part of the boundary between Cameroun and Gabon, French Equatorial Africa. It was a lonely spot, carved in the mahogany forest of the north bank, deep in the elephant country.

The people were *Fang*, who, like most primitives, are sane enough to dislike working for more than they need. My job was to persuade them that they could not prosper without my cotton prints, machetes, bars of salt, head tobacco, wire and fish hooks.

Up to the time I arrived they had been content to work their small gardens and hunt enough to provide for themselves and the old people of their villages. Their spiritual needs were satisfied by witch doctors who interpreted natural phenomena according to their own ideas. Bad weather meant that the gods were angry with the people, so the people had to pay the witch doctor to make things right again. Good crops meant that the witch doctor had pleased the gods, so the people had to reward the witch doctor for his services. Whatever happened, the witch doctor won.

I hardly expected a witch doctor to interfere with me, especially a lady one, young and quite attractive.

I had sent for the chiefs of several villages up and down river, given them presents, assured them I was their friend prepared to pay with excellent trade goods for ivory, ebony, rubber and palm nuts. The chiefs departed, full of sardines and cabin bread, promising full cooperation. But nothing happened.

Next, I sent my interpreter, a husky *Bakoko* named Sala, to see what was what. He returned with reports of a most powerful witch who lived outside the village of Akbiam.

The following day I started out by dugout canoe to see for myself. Sala, who did not believe in witchcraft, guided us to a landing 10 hours upstream. There were neat, rectangular, bark and palm thatch huts lining a square chopped out of the forest. The ground between the huts was small and was swept clean. The huts seemed empty and the palaver house, the shelter where the old men crouched and boasted over the fire, was deserted.

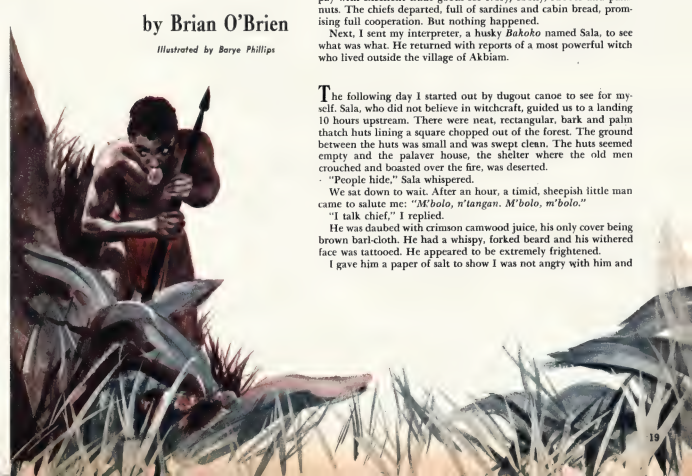
"People hide," Sala whispered.

We sat down to wait. After an hour, a timid, sheepish little man came to salute me: "*M'bolo, n'tangan. M'bolo, m'bolo.*"

"I talk chief," I replied.

He was daubed with crimson camwood juice, his only cover being brown bark-cloth. He had a whispy, forked beard and his withered face was tattooed. He appeared to be extremely frightened.

I gave him a paper of salt to show I was not angry with him and



told him to bring the witch to me. He scuttled off in great relief. We settled down to wait some more.

After a while I noticed my paddlers were edging toward the canoe, muttering uneasily together. "Where's that damned witch?" I asked Sala.

"He say, make you go to he," Sala informed me.

I had no time for a face-keeping contest so I followed a path out of the village until I came to a smaller village. With Sala close behind me, I examined a circle of elaborate huts. They were clay walled and stuck with fetishes whose details, to say the least, suggested virility. In the palaver house half a dozen cheeky young *Fang* posed insolently. I booted them out of their shelter and told them to bring me the witch—or else.

The bluff worked; she came out of the largest hut, while her young men slouched behind her, muttering. She advanced with rolling hips and saucy eyes. She was young, curvaceous and aware of it. She had on a white pith helmet and an elaborate pale blue silk negligee. String after string of beads hung from her neck, and her legs, which were revealed generously by the negligee, were painted with wood-ash so that they appeared to be covered with long, white stockings. The effect was distinctly disturbing!

"Who are you?" I demanded, through Sala.

"Me, I big person," she declared. "Come!"

I followed her into her hut. A large snake near the fire tray gave me a start; but I realized that it was a prop and tried to keep my eyes off it. The walls were hung with strips of skins, bunches of red parrot feathers, lizard claws and strings of greasy, stinking stuff.

"Ask her why she interferes with trade?" I said.

"You go!" she said to Sala.

He went out, promptly.

"Me, I savvy plenty thing," she informed me, leering

"You're a coast mammy, eh?" I said.

"Me, I *M'pongwe*," she said laughingly. "I savvy plenty *Govina* man."

"I'll bet you do," I grinned. "*Govina* man give you helmet and gown?"

"No humbug me," she snapped. "You pay me part trade. I send *Fang* people to you."

The old five per cent. Right in the middle of Africa! I laughed at her.

"No laugh!" she threatened. "I get plenty power!" Keeping her eyes on me she dusted me with powder she scooped from a box, then strewed it in a circle about my feet.

"This powder strong. This magic medicine." Her voice was low. She moved sinuously before me. "You not fit move," she said suddenly.

"Hear me," I said. "I not want trouble."

"You not fit move," she chanted. "You..."

"Wait," I said softly. "S'pose you call people to see your magic hold me in this circle. I'll step over the powder and they'll know you are rascal woman." I stepped outside the circle. "Now call all men to trade with me or I will drive you away!"

She lunged at a corner, snatched up a funnel of banana leaf and blew dust from it upon me.

"In eight day you dead!" she screamed.

I laughed at her and went outside. We returned to my compound, but after a week there was still no trade. I went up to Akbiam prepared to give my witch something to think about. I found the old chief, deserted by his people, sitting, half unconscious in the dust outside his hut.

"He say," Sala translated. "Witch blow powder on he. Small time he go die."

I spent four days trying to persuade the old man that he was not going to die. But he believed he was doomed, and he did die. I searched for the witch but she and her followers were gone. I burned her huts and went back to my station.

I decided to wait them out. I displayed great sheets of gaily printed cotton, gave salt to the village children, to

bacco to the old men. Suddenly they refused it. The children ran from me. Sala reported arrows shot at him in the forest.

"They say you bad man," he faltered. "They say you poison Akbiam chief. They fear you too much."

Well, it was up to me. I could either leave or chase away the mischief-making witch. "Tell all the chiefs," I ordered. "that it is not I but the witch who killed the Akbiam chief. Tell them that I will meet the witch before their faces and accuse her of this killing."

That night I heard the talk drums bumbling up and down river, muttering my accusation. All night they throbbed and all the next day. By this time half my laborers had run away and Sala stood guard over my uneasy sleep with a shotgun. Then, one morning, Sala awakened me with news.

"A man called to me in the darkness," he reported. "The *Fang* people and the witch of Akbiam will come to this place. The old ones will hear your talk."

They began to arrive as the sun rose. By noon there were more than 100 *Fang* squatting in the swept compound. The chiefs sat on their stools in the shade of overhanging trees, and late in the afternoon a canoe pulled in to the bank and from it stepped the witch, wearing a white pompon, a narrow band of red cloth covering her breasts, and a larger section of fabric loosely draped around her hips.

I watched carefully from my hut. A number of young *Fang* swung their spears before the witch, shoving like young bulls to impress her. The older ones watched her furtively as she posed elegantly smelling at a cake of pink toilet soap.

At dusk I had a fire lit outside my hut and sent Sala to set up a camp table and chair so I could watch the *Fang*. They fidgeted, listening to the derisive murmurs of the witch. After a wait I called the chiefs forward. The witch swanked ahead of them.

"Back," I ordered. "I will talk to men not to a bush cat!"

"You fool-man," she sputtered. "Pretty soon you go eat trouble." But she returned, flouncing to her place.

"This woman has said I killed a chief," I told them, waiting for Sala to interpret. "This is a lie. The woman killed him not with magic but with bad words. She told him that he would die. He, believing, died."

"You lie!" she screamed and chattered madly in the native tongue.

"What does she say?" I snapped as the chiefs listened, then slowly turned their tattered heads to me.

"E ke!" Sala gasped. "She say, s'pose you say you no kill this chief, you go drink sassawood. Then all man savvy if you lie."

That stopped me. The sassawood ordeal is one of the most ancient in Africa. Africans believe that a murderer kills under possession of a devil. If he denies the crime, the witchmen prepare a brew of a certain bark. The accused swallows it. If he commences to stagger, it is believed the devil struggles within him. He is immediately killed. If he is able to disgorge the poison, he is believed innocent. The witchman who prepares the brew will guarantee, for a fee, the victim's life or death. By the glint in the witch's eye I could already see my sentence.

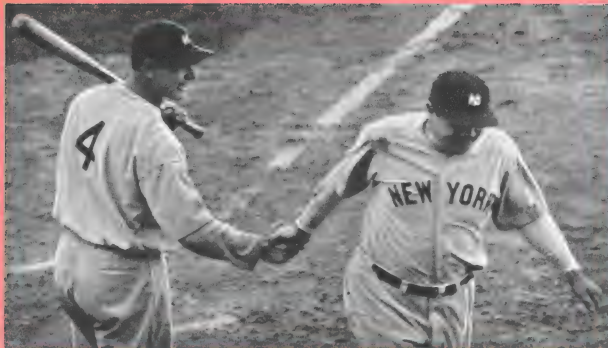
"How you go do, Master?" Sala whispered.

The witch yelled something tauntingly.

"She say you fear. She say you kill that man." Sala's face was gray. "How we go do, Master?"

"Tell them I will drink the sassawood," I said. Anything to get a little time to think! They yelled. They stamped their feet and for a moment I thought they'd sink their spears into that lolling wench in the slipping breastcloth.

Then an ancient little man hobbled from a stool. He wore a hat of woven grass and about his scrawny neck hung amulets. Iron bracelets and a strangely beaked axe indicated him to be an important chief. [Continued on page 41]



Baseball's great 1-2 punch, Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth. Gehrig died at 36 from lateral sclerosis, Ruth at 53 from cancer.

Athletes Are NOT SO TOUGH

Don't envy those supermen of sports—too many of them are pushovers for diseases an average guy could handle in stride

You might doubt it, and your wife or girl friend won't believe it, but it's a fact that many of our top athletes are Grade B specimens.

by Eric Northrup

There's solid medical evidence behind the new trend among insurance companies to think twice before covering the big sports stars with life policies. And the top men in Selective Service Headquarters will testify that a great number of our muscle men, who look as if they could tear a building down barehanded, couldn't even pass the wartime standards of our armed forces.

Perhaps the whole situation was best summed up by the late Chauncey Depew who wisecracked, "Exercise! I get my exercise acting as pallbearer for my friends who exercised!"

Steady readers of the sports sections know all too well that a not uncommon item on their favorite pages is that which tells of a big name athlete dying in the prime of life. Already on this dreaded roster are the names of such greats as Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth, Jim Tabor, Tony Lazzeri, Tiny Bonham and George Gipp, and so on and on in sad procession. . . .

Were these premature deaths all accidents, caused by injury or disease, or do athletes as a group show special tendencies to illness and disaster? Here's the answer.

For thousands of years people have accepted the notion that athletics and strenuous physical exercise produce a special caliber of human anatomy, a super-physique that is sounder, sturdier and healthier than that found on the common run of male specimens. Physical fitness, measured by the size of your bicep or the speed of your footwork, has become a universal catchword by which to recognize the "superior" male. It casts a shadow of inferiority across the souls of those who are short, skinny or obese, and goads millions of unathletic men to punish their tired bodies with exercise in the hope that they may reach the minimum standards set by our magnificent All-American hero-athletes.

It is only within the past few years that medical and research specialists have come forth to challenge this ancient, deeply-rooted notion. By what right, they ask, does the athlete reign supreme as the center of the male universe? Is he actually as tough and healthy as he seems? Do athletes live longer and do they resist disease better than the rest of mankind? Are they better lovers than grocery clerks, car mechanics, or window-dressers? The answers to these questions, gathered by scientists and trained investigators throughout the nation, show not a scrap of evidence



Ernie "Tiny" Bonham of the Yankees, Notre Dame's immortal George Gipp and Jim Tabor of the Red Sox

(l. to r.) were competitors whose physiques seemed indestructible. Bonham and Tabor were dead at 36, Gipp at 21.

that athletes are in any way superior to the general issue of U.S. men. More and more facts point the other way.

Dr. Peter B. Steincrohn, a doctor who in his young manhood engaged in most major sports, including college football, states that "for every exceptional man of athletic type who lives to a ripe old age there are untold numbers who die comparatively early."

One of America's leading experts on the health of athletes, Dr. Louis Dublin of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, confirms this opinion in a study of the death rate among 5,000 former college athletes from 10 leading American colleges—men who, as Dr. Dublin puts it, "represented the cream of the cream of American manhood." His report, recognized as the most authoritative to date, concludes with the following remarkable statement:

"It is a good deal of an assumption that the athletic type of build and great longevity go hand in hand. There are facts pointing the other way which we in the insurance business are gradually making note of. Those who arrive at a ripe old age are often small and physically underdeveloped people. Women live much longer than men. Men of large frame and especially those inclined to become seriously overweight give high mortality rates, and insurance companies are very cautious in insuring them at standard rates. It is therefore possible that the type of man who is selected for athletic activity may, after all, not be cut out for extremely favorable longevity."

Thirty-two per cent of the athletes who had passed the age of 45 died of heart disease, as compared to only 20 per cent of men in the same age group from the general population. This is noteworthy in the face of the fact that most of the college men came from a much higher income bracket than did their non-athletic brothers.

The very common notion that athletics promotes better health is founded more on fiction than fact. Vigorous exercise may bulge your muscles, but there's no evidence to show that body building and other assorted he-man routines can do anything to protect you from the "bugs" and viruses that cause disease. Some authorities even maintain that full-time athletes are actually *more* susceptible to disease than are most average males.

Dr. Bernard J. Fiscarra, who specializes in treating sports personalities, says, "It has been my sad personal experience that athletes tolerate infections very poorly." He describes two tragic examples—one a 19-year-old prep school quarterback who died of infection after an appendicitis operation, the other a 6-foot-4-inch college basketball player whose life was cut short by an infected rectum. Both men were given massive doses of penicillin, terramycin and other powerful anti-bacterial drugs—treatment that would lead

to full recovery for 99 out of a hundred average American males.

George Gipp who died at the age of 21 from a throat infection and Tiny Bonham, who was just 36 when he died from a relapse a week after an appendectomy are two other sad examples that back up Dr. Fiscarra's statement.

The experience of Dr. Fiscarra is bolstered by other leading authorities. In a broad survey of sports injuries over a period of years, Dr. Thomas A. Gonzales, Chief Medical Examiner of New York City, reports in the Journal of the American Medical Association that "acute, subacute or chronic infection . . . was a frequent cause of death in football injuries."

From Johns Hopkins' famous research center at Baltimore comes additional exciting evidence to prove that physical overactivity can lower the body's normal defenses against infection. Scientists there have taken two groups of rats—one heavily exercised, the other allowed to idle—and shot them full of disease germs. The results showed that the energetic rats were first to become infected, stayed sick longer and died in much greater numbers than the idlers.

The reason why athletes have low resistance to disease, explains Dr. Fiscarra, is obvious. In the first place, men who are constantly training for competitive sports develop "hypermetabolism"—they burn body fuels more rapidly to produce the extra energy needed for speed and power. Secondly, by maintaining an abnormal pace of activity far in excess of everyday living needs, they often exhaust the body's reserve energies, without which even the best of the wonder drugs cannot do a full-scale job of knocking out invading bacteria.

One of the world's top physiologists, South Africa's Dr. Ernst Jökl, sums it up in this way: "Physical training," says Jökl, "is a procedure capable of improving efficiency, but not of improving health."

The theory that exercise aids digestion—"helps to keep you regular"—is as old as it is unscientific. It dates back to a 14th-century Greek doctor, Joannes Actuarius, who was the first to advocate boxing and other of the manly arts as an aid to bowel elimination. A 16th-century Italian, Archange Tucaro, prescribed 53 kinds of jumping as a means of combating constipation. Yet modern research finds not a shadow of proof that exercise can streamline your digestion. Several years ago Bernard Baruch's Committee on Physical Medicine dug into all the scientific literature and failed to find any facts to support this ancient theory.

The truth is that constipation bothers as many athletes as it does bookkeepers. A survey at Columbia University showed that approximately one-third of a group of active gym students tested suffered with delayed elimination.

exactly the ratio of constipation found among average working males.

Sexual virility is often falsely credited to the big-chested, athletic type of male. Specialists have found that the "gorgeous hunk of man" most women rave about has no special amatory edge over his less picturesque neighbor. The notion that because a man is powerfully developed at the torso he must be well-endowed elsewhere, is sheer poppycock.

Doctors and chaplains have observed that vigorous athletics often serves as a substitute for sex.

Urologists, who specialize in the problems of impotence and sexual adjustment, tell us that the key to success in love-making depends less upon the size of one's masculine equipment than it does upon emotional stability and good general health.

Dr. David F. Tracy, who has served as psychologist for the St. Louis Browns, the New York Rangers and other major sports clubs, states that "strenuous physical exertion, by exhausting nervous energy and shunting vital blood supply to the voluntary muscles of the body, definitely competes with sexual activity. I have had personal talks with scores of athletes and know for a fact that there are few players who, after a particularly strenuous game, can devote the same energies to their love activities as, let us say, the fellow who hugs a desk or a counter all day."

The guy who can pull a locomotive with his hair, bend wrought iron rods with his bare hands, or do the 100-yard dash in 10 seconds flat may be a total washout in his lady's boudoir, whereas the meek little fellow who bootlicks his boss and fears his own shadow, may sire 13 children and bring infinite marital fulfillment to his spouse in the process. According to Dr. Kinsey, world's number one authority on human sexual behavior, "the list of top athletes include persons with both high and low rates of sexual outlet."

Another common fallacy is that exercise is a healthful, efficient way to lose weight.

One of the hardest-working amateur athletes I know is a middle-aged editor who once played college basketball and is excessively vain about his lanky, well-tailored figure. He worries about the fact that his desk job robs him of the opportunity for exercise, snatches every chance he can to race through two or three sets of tennis, and every so often exhausts himself with a two mile jaunt over the Connecticut countryside—all because he subscribes to the theory that this helps keep his figure trim and youthful. Actually the man expends a great deal of physical and nervous energy on his job, is restless and high-strung by nature, and eats so lightly that, unless he

[Continued on page 39]

Mickey Mantle, the young Yankee slugger, and Tommy Lewis, Alabama's famous "twelfth" tackle, look as if they could win a war by themselves, but both were classified 4-F.





This is the shot of Mara Lane which, with the label "England's Marilyn Monroe," started her on her way to Hollywood and a promising career with RKO Radio.



A confirmed night owl, Mara sleeps late and can't stand people calling before 11. If she looks like this in the morning, what guy would mind waiting until 11:01 or so?

It had to happen. Shortly after Mara landed in Hollywood, she was caught and shot in this very Monroe-ish pose. As far as roles go, she'd "like to be a girl who's sexy but good."



PLAIN MARA LANE

She claims she hates to be compared to other stars and wants to be known as just "plain Mara Lane." But apparently she forgot to tell her press agent who pinned the tag "England's Marilyn Monroe" on her. Actually Miss Lane looks about as much like Marilyn Monroe as she does like Joe DiMaggio, but the wire services that ran her pictures didn't seem to care. Neither did the top brass at RKO Radio. They got on the trans-Atlantic phone and before you could say "movies are better than ever" had signed Mara for an opus with the intriguing title of *Susan Slept Here*. The Vienna-born English beauty, who *does* look like Elizabeth Taylor, is no stranger to the U. S. A. Her engineer-father brought Mara, her sister and mother here in 1939 and they stayed until 1949. Two days after the family returned to England, a talent scout saw Mara in a restaurant and got her into British films. Now Hollywood predicts even greater things for her. The press agent who started it all with the Monroe gimmick? He's out looking for a new client. •



The press agent who thought up the Monroe tag might have known what he was doing, but he was off on his look-alikes. Mara's face and figure are more easily mistaken for those of Elizabeth Taylor.



FACT CRIME



Case of the Courtroom Casanova

The sexy lawyer had a bag of tricks for his female clients. He was even clever enough to literally get away with murder

by Alan Hynd

Illustrated by Ray Johnston

Victor Innes, in the year 1911, was a devastatingly handsome big hunk of beefcake, just turned 50, and the leading divorce lawyer in Carson City, Nevada. Innes always had his pretty feminine clients pass their six-weeks period of residence in one wing of the large hotel suite where he lived, the better, he maintained, to carry on business with them. But the considered judgment in Carson City was that the big lawyer installed pretty clients in his quarters to carry on monkey business.

When a fashionably-dressed, arrestingly-constructed girl of 29 named Eloise Nelms McDonald checked into Carson City from Atlanta, Georgia one fine summer day, seeking the best divorce lawyer in town, she naturally wound up in residence with Victor Innes.

Innes was something of a mystic, having once studied Yoga in the Orient. One morning he knocked on the door of Mrs. McDonald's bedroom. When she answered, there stood the big mouthpiece wearing trunks and a cordial smile. He had wavy hair, a handsome black moustache, and a quantity of fur on his chest. He looked, acted and felt, thanks to Yoga, like a man in his late 30s.

"Don't be alarmed," said Innes, before his attractive client could speak or slam the door. "I just want to show you something that will be very good for you."

Such was the power of the Innes personality—warm, confidential, all-embracing—that Mrs. McDonald, who seems to have been none too bright, heard herself inviting the man in to see what he had to offer. What Innes was offering was an introduction to the mysteries of Yoga—a science, he explained, that would tune up Mrs. McDonald physically, mentally and spiritually, and hold back the years.

As Innes walked up and down the bedroom, flexing his muscles and turning an occasional handspring, he expounded, in an organ-like voice, his Yoga theories. Mrs. McDonald somehow felt that she was just beginning to live.

The first thing that Innes had his client-student do was stand on her head. This was difficult for the girl at first, but when Innes took hold of her calves, the feat seemed easier. But it would be easier yet, he said, if she took off a couple of things.

Innes, master in the techniques of seduction, confined himself strictly to teaching Mrs. McDonald how to stand on her head. At the end of the first lesson

The first thing Innes had his client-student do was stand on her head. When she failed the first time, he told her it would be easier if she took her clothes off. An old Yoga custom, he said.

he bowed from the waist, and departed. The lady, amorously aroused by the handsome big lawyer, ran down the hall to his suite and practically battered her way in.

There was a third individual on the premises—a dreary, gray-haired little middle-aged woman with silver-rimmed glasses and a wrinkled face. She was, Innes explained, his housekeeper, and her name was Mrs. Margaret Mims. It seemed that "Aunt Margaret" was also taking lessons in Yoga. This necessitated Innes' slipping into her bedroom in the middle of the night—practically every night.

While the seduction of Eloise was in full flower, Innes, who could smell money, made detailed inquiries into the girl's background. It seemed that her father, an Atlanta politician, had been a foresighted man in real estate investments. When the old boy kicked off he left a fortune of \$500,000 to be divided equally among Eloise, a younger sister, an older brother, and their mother.

Simultaneous with the discovery that Eloise was heiress to \$125,000—all of it in cash in an Atlanta bank—Innes informed his pretty client that her husband was contesting the divorce. "But don't worry," he assured the girl. "It may take a little time but it'll all straighten out." Actually, the girl's husband wasn't contesting the divorce at all.

Eloise never left the hotel except in company of Innes. As time passed and the two grew closer, Innes proposed marriage. The big man disclosed that he was worth millions in Colorado silver-mining holdings and, once Eloise's divorce was through, he planned to go to the Orient with her and establish a Yogi cult. The Georgia girl, by this time completely off her head about Innes, just nodded, starry-eyed.

Came the day when the talk took a fiscal turn. The result: Eloise wrote to her Atlanta bank, had \$50,000 sent to her, and turned it over to her handsome fiancé to invest in mining stocks for her.

A year passed. No divorce yet. Innes was still telling Eloise that her husband, unexplainably stubborn, was contesting the action. Eloise, deliciously happy with Innes and their plans to go to India, didn't doubt a thing he told her.

She was still living in the big lawyer's hotel suite with shadowy Aunt Margaret hovering in the background. When Innes suggested that Eloise turn over another \$50,000 for him to invest, she did so without giving the matter a second thought.

It was in the summer of 1913—two years after Eloise had first arrived in Carson City—that her divorce came through. Innes suggested that she return to Atlanta and wait there until he closed his business affairs in Nevada. Then he would reunite with her in Georgia, marry her and take her to the Orient.

Back in Atlanta, Eloise confided everything—everything—to her younger sister, Beatrice. Beatrice, a plain-looking girl was, unlike Eloise, a shrewd dame with a buck. "I think that man's nothing but a dirty crook," Beatrice said. "Where's the proof of everything he's told you about your big profits in those silver mines?" Beatrice related the story to their mother—and the old lady agreed that Eloise had not only been seduced, but swindled.

At first, of course, Eloise wouldn't believe Beatrice and her mother. But as the months wore on, with no word from Innes, she began to have her doubts. Finally she wrote to Innes asking that he return her money. Still no word. Then she wrote, breaking off their engagement. No word on that, either.

Then one fine day in mid-June of 1914—a year after she had last seen Innes—Eloise received a telephone call. Innes was in Atlanta—accompanied by Aunt Margaret—and was brimming with great news. Not only had Eloise made a fortune in Nevada silver, but she stood to become a million-heiress in a new and secret oil strike he had made in Texas. That's why she hadn't heard from him. He had been work-

ing so secretly in Texas that he hadn't dared even to write, and he had invested her silver profits in his oil enterprise.

Appearing at the Nelms home with Aunt Margaret, Innes had a portfolio crammed with leases, deeds, letters and documents of all kinds, buttressing his story about the secret Texas oil strike. It would be only a short while now, he said, when he and Eloise would be married and off to India.

Innes suggested that Eloise withdraw her remaining \$25,000 from the bank so he could pyramid it for her in

"He shipped this box from San Antonio and marked it **BOOKS**," Nelms said. "But look what's in it. Just look!"



Texas. *Dat Ole Devil Sex* had taken possession of Eloise again and she agreed to clean out her bank account and turn the money over to Innes. Beatrice, still very skeptical, protested, but the mother didn't. The old lady, too, was won over by the Innes charm.

"My dear," Innes said to his fiancée's sister, "I see that I will have to *prove* things to you. Very well. You and Eloise come to Texas with Aunt Margaret and me—at my expense. Then you can see for yourself." Beatrice, still very skeptical, joined the party and left town.

A whole month passed without the mother of the two girls getting any word from them. Then came a typewritten letter, postmarked Houston, Texas, and signed, in typewriting, "Beatrice." The letter was short and horrible. It stated that Beatrice, who had always been jealous of Eloise, had killed her. It further stated that Beatrice was going to

San Francisco, where the brother, Marshall Nelms, was in business, to do away with him.

In San Francisco, Marshall Nelms, in response to a frantic telegram from his mother, hastened to Atlanta and listened to the background of the drama. Nelms, a thin, earnest-looking fellow in his middle 30s, was loathe to report the case to the local police for fear of exposing the family to a scandal. Instead, he got off a long letter to the police of Carson City, explaining that Innes had seduced and bilked his sister and asking what they knew about the man and Aunt Margaret.



The Carson City police replied that they knew plenty. Victor Innes was nothing but a wolfish confidence man. His law practice had been only incidental to his romancing and bilking women who had come to Carson City to get divorces. But since nobody had ever made a legal complaint about being seduced, or bilked, probably because they had been loathe to subject themselves to public ridicule, no legal action had ever been instituted against Innes.

As for Aunt Margaret, she was in reality Innes' wife and had been for a number of years. Collaborating with her husband in all his schemes, the little woman had looked upon his seductions of other women as a sort of an occupational sacrifice.

Nelms went through cancelled checks that Eloise had written and that had been returned from the girl's Atlanta bank. He came across a \$25,000 check that Eloise had made

out to Innes and that had cleared through a New Orleans bank.

Hastening to New Orleans, Nelms canvassed the hotels there. He learned that an imposing-looking gentleman, obviously Victor Innes but registered as W. W. Cavanaugh, had taken an expensive suite at a leading hotel on June 14th—the day after the Nelms sisters and Mr. and Mrs. Innes had left Atlanta. The hotel people recalled that Mr. Cavanaugh, who had been a lavish tipper, had been accompanied by three women—one about 50, the others much younger.

Eloise, Marshall Nelms knew, had left home with a trunk—a handsome new trunk. The porter's records at the New Orleans hotel disclosed that somebody in the Cavanaugh party had shipped a trunk June 15th to General Delivery, San Antonio, Texas.

Next stop for Marshall Nelms, naturally: San Antonio. There the records at the railroad express office turned up the fact that a trunk that had been shipped from New Orleans June 15th had been taken by truck to an address on Wilkins Avenue in San Antonio.

The Wilkins Avenue address turned out to be a dilapidated bungalow in a dreary and sparsely populated district. The place was vacant. Nelms let himself in. The bungalow was crudely furnished, dank, dreary and somehow forbidding. The day was cloudy and a strong mid-summer wind shook the window panes as Nelms poked around the premises.

It was in the bedroom that Nelms stopped in his tracks. There, on the wall, were dark, suspicious-looking splotches. Blood, Nelms figured. The blood of Eloise.

Outside, in the rubbish-littered back yard, Marshall Nelms came across the remains of what had been a sizeable fire. Poking through the ashes, he found a shoe that had partially escaped the flames—a shoe bearing the imprint of an Atlanta bootery and the size figure 2-A. Although Eloise had had a large foot, Beatrice had had a small one—size 2-A. And Beatrice Nelms had always purchased her footwear at the bootery whose stamp was on this shoe.

Then Nelms discovered something else—a small, blackened locket. When he cleaned the locket with saliva and a handkerchief two initials emerged—E. N.

So both of the sisters had been slain. Victor Innes, the wolfish lawyer-con man, had taken \$100,000 from Eloise while she was in Reno. Then, hungry for that remaining \$25,000, Innes and Aunt Margaret had stopped off in Atlanta.

Although Eloise, flighty and gullible, had been easy to deal with, Beatrice would have been a problem—and perhaps a serious one—to Innes and his wife. So they had lured Beatrice along on the spurious trip to Texas and, having obtained the last of Eloise's money, had, to prevent future exposure, done away with both of the sisters. Then, seizing upon the ill feeling between the two sisters as an opportunity to account for the disappearance of both of them, they had gone to Houston and sent the mother the letter saying the plain sister had killed the pretty one.

The woman who owned the bungalow—a newsy-looking character with thick-lensed glasses and a runny nose—recalled having rented the premises to a handsome big man named W. W. Cavanaugh. Cavanaugh, or Innes, had rented the place on the first day of June, for a period of one month.

"You're sure of that date when he rented it?" Nelms asked the landlady. She was absolutely sure. She kept records. That, then, threw a new light on the whole horrible business. Innes had rented the bungalow almost two weeks before he had appeared in New Orleans to pick up the cash and the sisters. Why would he have made advance preparations to take Eloise to such a lonely, dilapidated place unless he had, even before laying hands on the last of the girl's inheritance, planned to murder her? Sister Beatrice had been slain merely [Continued on page 43]

THE GREAT

Everyone on the base saw the
B-29 burn—except
the O. D. and the guards.
They were too busy
breaking every rule in the book

by Jay Haley

Illustrated by Hamilton Greene

The night the B-29 burned up was a night of great excitement at Cola Field. It was probably the finest fire in the history of Northern Florida, and it is said that people there still use it as a date to measure things by.

There were only four men on the entire field who didn't see the fire. They were the Officer of the Day, the Sergeant of the Guard, and the two men on guard duty. They should have been the first to see it and sounded the alarm, but it's only in official reports that the men who are supposed to do things are the ones who do. There was one thing true in the official report of the Cola Field fire. It said the airplane was demolished, and indeed it was. A private went out the next day and swept what remained of a million-dollar airplane into a dustpan.

The man who actually discovered the fire was a pilot on a cross-country flight who happened to be passing over the field. Matthews, the tower operator was asleep when the call came in, but he had the receiver turned up loud and the urgent voice woke him up.

"Cola tower, Cola tower, this is LX-2. Over," said the voice.

Matthews climbed off his back and staggered over to the transmitter. When the call was repeated, he picked up the microphone and said, "LX-2, this is Cola tower, land runway three, wind south to southwest. Over."

"Cola tower," said the voice on the radio, "for cripes sake

SNAFU



"What a chance I missed," Barbini said. "I could have shot him. I could have shot him legally dead."

I don't want to land, and you don't even have your runway lights on. I just wondered if you knew one of your aircraft on the ramp is on fire. Over."

Matthews looked out the lower windows down at the ramp, which was a wide strip of cement 200 yards long with airplanes lined up on it. He saw a B-29 at the far end with flames coming out of the pilot's cabin. He switched on the microphone and said, "LX-2, this is Cola tower, we are aware of the fire and fighting it. Thank you. Over."

"Roger and good luck," said the pilot.

Matthews stood there and looked at the fire a moment, and then he picked up the phone and called the Officer of the Day. The switchboard operator told him the Officer of the Day was out inspecting the guard posts. Matthews then called the Fire Department. A sleepy voice answered and when Matthews told him about the fire the voice said, "Ah, cut it out, nobody's in those ships tonight." After arguing with him Matthews convinced him that it wasn't a joke.

By this time the flames were enveloping the nose of the B-29. An F-86 Sabre jet, the Commanding Officer's personal plane, was parked next to the B-29 and Matthews began to worry about that ship catching fire too. He couldn't see any activity around the burning plane, and he couldn't see the

ramp guard who was supposed to be out there.

Matthews quickly climbed down the tower ladder, hurried to the line and climbed on a tractor tug which was kept there to move planes and haul equipment. Then he drove the tug out on the ramp and sped down the line of airplanes. He parked in front of the F-86 and hooked on. As he started to pull the plane away, a box of ammunition went off in the burning B-29. The ship contained cases of .50-caliber machine-gun bullets which the gunners used in their training, and they hadn't been removed after the day's flight as they should have been. The fire set them off, and there was a crackling, snapping sound, and the whine of bullets in the air.

Matthews didn't stop until he had towed the airplane a safe distance up the ramp.

Just then the fire department arrived, and the aircraft fire truck pulled up close to the burning plane. Gunfire sounded from the plane, and the truck backed away so fast it threw one of the men off the back. He jumped to his feet and ran after it, bullets whizzing after him. The bullets flew only 40 or 50 feet, but that was far enough to make the ship too dangerous to approach. Besides, it was clear to the firemen that the gas tanks were going to explode at any moment.

A crowd was beginning to gather down on the ramp by that time, and the men were excited by the fire. Many of them were just coming in from town, and they were passing bottles about.

Then one of the gas tanks went off and sent a pillar of flame 300 feet in the air with a great woosh of sound. The other gas tank exploded, and the flames lit up the whole airfield. It was a magnificent sight.

At that moment Corporal Keen, the Corporal of the Guard, arrived and he began to circulate among the crowd looking for the Sergeant of the Guard or the Officer of the Day. Neither of the men was to be found. A few officers had come down, but they were pilots, and they frolicked around enjoying the fire. The Commanding Officer of the field wasn't there either—he was down in Miami. It wouldn't have mattered much if he'd been there, because there was nothing anyone could do except stand and admire the fire. The Officer of the Day didn't even arrive in time to do that. According to the official report he was the first man down on the line, but then he wrote the report. As a matter of fact he didn't even find out there was a fire until the next morning.

The reason I know this is because the Officer of the Day that night was Lt. Breen, who was in charge of our radio shop at Cola Field. Lt. Breen took his duties seriously, and the camp always dreaded it when it was his turn to be Officer of the Day. Ordinarily the man with that duty spends his time in the Officers' Club, but Lt. Breen was always hurrying about, inspecting the guards, for he was sure they spent their time sleeping when they weren't stealing gas. The guards were the mechanics and radiomen and clerks on the field who took a turn at guard duty once a month. No one was happy to do it because there's nothing more boring than guard duty. At Cola Field there was a guard down on the ramp to keep an eye on the airplanes and a guard out at the gas dump about a mile away in the swamp. The guard on the gas dump that night was Pvt. Barboni, one of Lt. Breen's favorite targets.

Barboni was known as the ugliest man in the world, and he was proud of the title. He looked a little like an ape, although his forehead was lower and his arms were longer. His face had a pushed-in look, except for his jaw which stuck out. He was a great coward, but he kept many men afraid of him by his pugnacious attitude. If anyone disagreed with him, Barboni would thrust out his chin into the fellow's face and say, "You call me a liar?" If the man said "Yes," Barboni would immediately back down.

Lt. Breen was a very military young man, and he had formerly been in charge of air cadets. He liked soldiers who

were slim and erect. This strange, apelike man, Barboni, infuriated Lt. Breen. And vice versa.

It wasn't only Lt. Breen that Barboni didn't get along with, he didn't get along with anybody. He didn't like the Air Force, and least of all he liked Cola Field. He had been drafted just at the end of World War II and sent to the Radio School. The war ended before he was out of school and he rather liked it in the school because it was near St. Louis where there were a great many women. So he joined the Reserves, confident that there would be peace in the world. Then Korea happened and Barboni was called back in, kicking and screaming.

Lt. Breen didn't know Barboni was on guard duty the night of the fire until he was driving down to the line to inspect the guards with Skits, the Sergeant of the Guard. He asked casually, "Who's on duty tonight?"

"Barboni's at the dump," said Skits, "and Pernell is on the ramp."

"Barboni?" said Lt. Breen. "Barboni is on tonight?" He looked at Skits through his steel rimmed glasses which he always wore on duty though he wore rimless ones in town. "He'll be asleep," he said.

"Oh, I don't think so," said Skits.

"He'll be asleep," said Lt. Breen. "And I shall catch him asleep and court martial him." He sat back in the jeep with a pleased expression on his face. "Sergeant," he said kindly, "tonight I'll show you the proper way to determine whether or not a guard is awake and alert."

Skits looked at the man and said nothing, like a good soldier. Skits was a career man, with 15 years' service behind him, and was used to men like Lt. Breen.

"Yes, indeed," said Lt. Breen. "I shall creep up on that miserable excuse for a soldier and surprise him sound asleep."

He was sure Barboni would be asleep because Barboni was asleep most of the time. Every night Barboni traveled up and down the countryside, coming over the fence to his barracks at dawn. So every day at work he would sit dozing, or slip off for a nap. There weren't enough women in the town of Cola to please Barboni, and he couldn't please the few that were there. In fact they would have nothing to do with him. So Barboni traveled from town to town, up and down the coast, every night on the prowl for women.

Skits and Lt. Breen drove along the edge of the airfield and then turned off on the road that led to the gas dump. The road was a narrow, dirt track through a pine forest.

"Stop here," said Lt. Breen suddenly. "Turn off the lights."

"You mean you're really going to creep up on him?" said Skits.

"Of course," said Lt. Breen. "We shall both go. You go on up the road, and I'll circle around through the forest and come up behind him."

"Not me," said Skits. "It's dangerous to slip up on a guard."

"You mean he might shoot?" said Lt. Breen.

"Of course he might," said Skits. "That's what he's there for. You'd better forget it."

"Sergeant," said Lt. Breen, "I was given sufficient training at OCS to be able to creep up on a man without his hearing me. You may remain here if you wish, but I shall do my duty and make sure this sentry is awake and alert."

"As you wish, sir," said Skits, and he relaxed down in his seat in the jeep.

It was about 10 o'clock when the phone rang in the guardhouse and Corporal Keen got up from the poker table and answered it. "Corporal of the Guard," he said.

"Hello, Keen," said the voice on the phone. "This is Barboni out at the gas dump. Is Skits there?"

"No, he's not," said Keen. "What's the trouble?"

"There's some strange kind of noise out in the swamp," said Barboni.

"It's probably wind," said Keen. [Continued on page 44]

Those Hot-Headed STEELHEADS

"I thought those steelheads were fighters," the big guy from Minnesota spat disgustedly. Ten seconds and one broken rod later he was convinced they were

by George Heinold

My spinning rod flipped a leaded, red-nosed fly across a stretch of fast Klamath River water. It landed near a boulder at the head of a deep channel, directly in line with an evergreen slope that branched out of the mountains of northern California. Keeping the pick-up finger of the reel open, so that the line would run out easily, I waited for the fly to sink, a slow process in that eddying, current-boiled water. Finally it completed its spiralling descent, struck rocky bottom, rested there for perhaps a second, and went tumbling downstream a few yards. All at once it stopped.

Fully expecting that I had snagged bottom, I gave the rod a vigorous twitch. But this particular "snag" wore fins and had a rocket in its tail. It responded to the sting of the hook with a jolting yank and zoomed upward on a sharp angle. A split fissured the river. Out of it hurtled a steelhead trout in a curving, tussling leap. The spray he threw at the sky would have cleared the head of a boy.

"Oh, man!" I cried, admiration replacing

my initial astonishment. "What a beauty!"

The old Klamath Indian who stood behind me wasn't at all impressed, except he seemed disgusted.

"You've caught much trouble," he said. "Fish too strong, river too fast, rod too little." Then, as an afterthought, he added, "Man from east too crazy."

That red-hued gentleman was entitled to express his opinion. He had had a part in this deal, for only a hour ago I'd asked him how one went about stretching a line on a good-sized steelie. Everything between us had been harmonious until I went to my car and returned with four ounces of rod and a reel filled with five-pound-test monofilament line. From then on he seemed to regret having become involved with me.

The steelhead soon proved that he had aligned himself to the Indian's cause. He energetically went about making a fool out of me. Falling back into the Klamath with a sharp smack, he took off at full tilt. My reel squalled as though ripped apart from within. The glass rod buckled

A steelie can strike and spit out a lure so gently, you'll miss him unless you watch the slightest hesitation in the drift of your line.

wildly. Leaving a rainbow of spray in its wake, the line tore through the water like a buzz-saw cutting custard. I hung on and hoped. There wasn't anything else to do.

"You better follow him down," the Indian advised. "Mebbe you can save some of your line."

The paces I went through during the next 20 minutes might well be incorporated into the training schedule of the Notre Dame football squad. Rod held high as I lurched and slogged over a slippery, cobblestoned stream bed. I followed that steelhead for 300 yards. I crossed knee-deep shallows, waist-high pools, climbed over three boulders, and vaulted one log. Luckily the fish remained in midstream. My breath was coming in gasps when the steelie entered a still, deep pool. Here he made another leap and sounded.

I needed a rest more than the fish did but I didn't dare waste precious minutes. This seemed like my big opportunity: if I rested, the steelie might recover and figure that I wasn't up to following him through the deeper-running rapids below the pool. So I hurried to the bank and, reeling as I went, recovered almost two-thirds of my 200 yards of line, a maneuver which put me nearly abreast of the sulking fish. Then, as I had often done with sounding Cape Cod striped bass, I held my line taut and gave the butt of the rod a couple of hard slaps. This treatment often jars the sensitive nerves of game fins and robs them of their self-possession.

The steelhead reacted to the vibrations even more wildly than a striper, he pulled a stunt so foolish that I was amazed. Instead of running downstream, or circling the big pool, he combed back to his starting point. The powerful currents retarded him noticeably; he was freighting instead of expressing. He plowed into the full brunt of the river like a madman, finally thrashing across a run of shoal into a pool at the end of a bar. Here he made another quivering leap and fell back flat-sided. A greatly subdued fish, he nosed to bottom and hung there, bulldoggish.

My rod was now exerting authority over the steelie. Twice I managed to turn him back as he tried to pull out of the pool. I closed the distance between us, cautiously pumping, inching him toward me until I could see him plainly. He saw me at about the same time and, mustering more energy than I thought possible, went into a slamming roar and pushed upstream with a drive that won him some more line. At the end of that 50-foot sprint he leaped again, flashing like a burnished missile.

That piece of exhibitionism, however, was the steelie's curtain performance, his final burst of aerial energy. He now wallowed on the surface, unable to do more than whip up bubbles with his tail. I led him toward me steadily and eased him over the gravel bank to the point where I could get a gill-hold. He was a beautiful, bright-sided specimen: 9 pounds, 27 inches.

I was admiring my fish and rubbing a sore right wrist when I heard gravel crunch behind me. It was the wild Indian. His curiosity had got the best of him, and he had come down the river to see how I made out. He stood beside me several moments, silently shifting his gaze between the

steelhead and the spinning outfit which had landed him.

"You damn tooting lucky man," he finally commented. "Too bad. No holding you down now."

Like so many die-hards, that Indian belonged to a school which underrates spinning tackle in its lighter dimensions. It is true that a husky, fresh-run steelhead, once he gets underway, can pour on enough coal to make you chase him—or else. But fish of this bracket are also pursued by anglers armed with stout baitcasters and standard nine-foot, double-handed steelhead fly rods popular on the west coast. The only kind of tackle a husky steelie can't run out against should be used for amberjacks and groupers.

Steelheads are strong enough, swift enough, and wily enough to make landing them largely a mixture of skill and luck, regardless of the kind of *sporting* tackle used. Ernie St. Claire, one of the west coast's most adept light-tackle anglers, brought in a 30-pound, 3-ounce steelhead with five-pound-test spinning line. Ernie's the same gent who also killed a 52-pound king salmon with similar

monofilament line boosted to six-pound-test. There is ample reason to support the technique of spinning for steelheads with light tackle.

The Klamath, queen of California's steelhead streams, is especially suited for light spinning from late August until November. Those are the months when an early or "summer" run of steelies enters her lower waters. These fish average around five pounds and dominate the Klamath until, with the coming of winter rains, the larger steelies take over. It is then that swollen waters and larger game make it necessary to use heavier tackle to deliver lures which must be weighted with lead sinkers. Until these conditions arrive, the lower Klamath is an ideal piece of water for those of us who are satisfied with smaller fish caught on lighter tackle. I never once regretted visiting her during September.

A species of migratory rainbow trout, the pugnacious steelhead resembles the Atlantic salmon in many respects. He is spawned in western coastal streams. Then, after spending a year or so in turbulent pools and riffles amid green, mountainous back-grounds, he slips downstream and finally disappears into the Pacific. No one knows just where he hangs out in the ocean. But, after a couple of years, he returns to the stream of his birth, bright, fat and sassy, ready to spawn. As the steelhead works his way up spawning streams, his color changes from a newly-minted dollar to the brilliant hues of the non-migratory rainbow trout.

My next day of fishing in the Klamath began unpromisingly. It was a first-sun-then-fog morning. The fishing was just as depressing as the weather. Two hours of whipping flies and bucktails was fruitless. Next I tried spinners and spoons. Still no luck. Finally, in disgust, I sat on a log on the bank and contemplated whether or not I should stoop to "goof," a western nickname for salmon eggs. A tackle dealer in the township of Klamath had insisted on giving me a jar of them.

I was idly fingering the jar when a heavy swirl caught my eye. It showed in an area of slick water about a third of



The author's first catch was a 9-lb. 27-inch battler who dragged him 300 yards down the Klamath River and gave him a good ducking before finally succumbing.

the way across the stream. Then suddenly it happened again.

With the wobbling spoon tied to my line, I waded into the Klamath with more energy than wisdom. The water was up to my hips, its sucking action pressing the waders against me. It was an uncomfortable feeling, and I was glad that I had the waders strapped tightly around the top.

I was about to back into shallower water when the steelie rose again. I cast my spoon to a point in the river above him, knowing that it would sink and come tumbling down, tantalizingly. It seemed like a good cast—at the beginning.

Then, after riding nearly half its run-back, the spoon caught in a whirlpool and was hurled to my left.

Oh, well, I thought, feeling with increasing nervousness the current swirl about me, I'll reel in and make my next cast from safer water.

That was when I found out how thoroughly unpredictable a steelhead can be. Bobbling on top of the water, the spoon must have been at least 60 feet from where the fish was lurking at the base of the boulder. He went arrowing across the swift run of current, passing within a dozen feet of me as I stood trying to pivot toward the bank. There was no ceremony, no finesse. The fish gave one big gulp, as though that spoon was a T-bone steak. Water boiled as mallet blows yanked the tip of my rod into a straining arc. The steelie made a leap, then circled and bored downward.

I raised my rod high and tried to swing into position—too hastily. My feet lost their grip. I stumbled, fell, and came up spouting part of the Klamath. Clutching my rod, I went floundering downstream about 75 feet, saw a tree jutting from the bank, and grabbed a branch. Then I was on my feet, only thigh-deep. The rod was still in my hand.

Somehow the pick-up finger of the reel had opened during my ducking. I looked at the spool, saw that it was nearly empty, and began to crank in line, wondering how much the steelhead had broken off.

That question was answered a few moments later in a surprising way. The line tightened as I cranked. I felt the tip of the rod begin to throb. Then, in a deep pool almost all the way across the river, the steelie—my spoon shining like a mirror at the side of his mouth—leaped. He had apparently cut out into the river and swum parallel with me as I went downstream. Then, instead of rampaging on with all my line, he had decided to sound in the pool.

In view of all the trouble he had given me, the fish wasn't very large—about four pounds. It took me less than 10 minutes to bring him to net.

During the days that followed I added a great deal to my knowledge of steelhead technique and "streamcraft." Two new runs of sea-bright fish made that apprenticeship most pleasant. I managed to keep in contact with one of the schools for three days, following the fish as they moved along, hooking, playing, and releasing some 30 steelies ranging in weight from two to six pounds.

Under most conditions, fishing for steelheads is a bottom technique. High-riding baits produced strikes infrequently. Steelies tend to hug bottom, lying behind boulders, especially at the tails of pools. Most of their favorite holding water is located near midstream. They love to hover in deep eddies and pockets surrounded by wild white water.

These spots are natural catch-alls for drifting food. Because of the swift waters they are hard to invade with lures presented by fly and baitcasting rods. Spinning tackle, on the other hand, will often do the job.

This fact was driven home to me the day I made my way up the Klamath and came across two men fishing near a bend with heavy fly rods. Up to their navels in fast water, both anglers were straining bamboo and muscle to reach a pocket of slick 80 feet beyond them. They were excited, and had good reasons to be. You could see the tails of fish appearing and disappearing in and around that pocket. The sight was almost more than a man could bear.

That luckless pair of anglers were growing more discouraged by the minute. They [Continued on page 38]

George Helmold, the author, gracefully brings a steelie to net. He found that his spinning rod could often do the job in spots where fly and baitcasting rods were useless.





Now: *New Gasolines for Your Car*

Your car and your pocketbook can both benefit from one of the two new types of gas now on the market. Here's how to choose the right one for your needs

by Sidney Margolius

Good news for every car owner is hidden behind the claims and counterclaims of the current gasoline war which has split the makers of automobile fuel into two opposing camps.

There actually are two new, improved kinds of gas on the market today which can give you better engine performance and save you money, depending on the kind of car you drive:

1) Shell and a few other gasolines containing the chemical *tricresyl phosphate*, referred to in ads as TCP. Purpose of this additive is to render harmless the lead deposited inside of engines by all gasolines, especially the premium types. These lead deposits often cause wasteful and noisy "pre-ignition," as well as spark plug fouling.

At this writing premium gas with TCP is marketed by Shell, Conoco and two regional distributors, Jenney and Deep Rock.

TCP does not raise the octane rating of gasolines. It claims to raise engine performance by other means which we shall presently discuss.

2) The second group of new gasolines are those whose octane ratings have been boosted for the benefit of the new high-compression automobile engines. Esso, Cities Service and a host of regional independents are included in this group. Up to now, the average octane rating of premium gasoline has been 91.5, but Esso's new premium gas is up to 95, and one mid-west distributor, Leonard, is offering 96. Even though these gasolines do not have additives to combat lead deposits, their distributors say they are solving the lead problem another way—by a new method of refining which requires less lead than heretofore in high-octane gas.

How good are the claims being made for the two groups?

To get the answer, which is important both to your car and your pocketbook, you need to know something about how gasoline performs in your engine.

Tetra-ethyl lead is added to both regular and premium (high-octane) gasolines, but in greater quantity to the high-octane. Its purpose is to make gasoline burn slower, and so, prevent knocking. But the lead used to stop knock has started a series of problems of its own. One of these is what engineers call "pre-ignition." Here's what happens:

Since some of the lead is left in the engine (most of it goes out the exhaust), a flaky deposit is formed on the piston head. After your car has run a few thousand miles, the piston head also accumulates carbon. Together, the lead and carbon deposits cause your piston heads to over-heat. The piston heads become so hot that they ignite the gas vapor before the spark plugs do. This action is not only amazingly noisy, but is wasteful because it robs your car of the power it was designed to give.

Pre-ignition sometimes causes weird things to happen in high-compression cars. Frequently, it makes an engine give out a "thudding" sound as you climb a hill, or open the throttle after a long crawl through city traffic. At other times it causes an erratic loud crack which engineers call "wild ping." Some car owners have even had the eerie experience of shutting off the ignition, only to find the motor kept running because the hot piston heads ignited the gas sucked in by the engine.

The problem of finding a good gasoline has put the motoring public and car manufacturers in a box. High-compression engines could give us greater mileage per gallon. Compressing the fuel mixtures in a smaller cylinder space explodes the gas with more power. But car manufacturers can't go ahead with their higher-compression engines until the gasoline people come up with a sufficiently high-

octane fuel with a slow-burning quality. The dilemma is that low-octane gas causes knock in a high-compression engine, while high-octane gas with lead causes pre-ignition.

Both groups of gasoline producers—those working with TCP and those working with higher octanes—are trying to cure pre-ignition in different ways so we can have high-octane gas without this new trouble. Let's examine their respective claims.

CAVALIER finds there is substantial scientific basis for the claim that TCP is a good cure for pre-ignition, if it is used in sufficient quantity in gasoline, and provided it doesn't cause other car ills, excessive exhaust-pipe deposits for example. At least two independent tests, by General Motors engineers and Dupont chemists, found TCP the most successful of several additives tested as pre-ignition cures.

The effort of gasoline companies to lick pre-ignition by producing higher-octane gas without relying so heavily on lead, similarly holds promise of better fuel for high-compression engines. However, this method is costly, requiring additional refinery facilities.

Either way—by TCP or higher octane—you, the car owner, have to foot the bill for improved gasolines. In fact, Shell and other companies offering improved premium grades, have already raised the price of their premium brands.

In case you're wondering whether there are any companies offering high-octane gasoline *without* lead, the answer is, yes. Amoco achieves its high-octane rating by adding benzene. The supply of benzene is limited, however, and Amoco is sold only in the East. It's also more expensive, except where some Amoco dealers have cut their prices to stay in line.

Another way the non-TCP camp is attempting to keep modern high-compression engines performing satisfactorily is with "scavenger" motor oils like Uniflo. These are detergent, or cleansing oils, especially designed to flow freely. Although this oil won't eliminate existing lead or carbon deposits, it will retard their accumulation—particularly in new cars or those whose engines are in excellent condition. For older cars, these special oils may not be desirable. They tend to leak out.

What about the other problem that the TCP additive claims to cure—spark-plug fouling?

Plug fouling is caused by deposits building up on the plug. The deposits short circuit the charge and prevent the spark from jumping the gap. The result: fuel mixture in the cylinder doesn't fire, fuel is wasted, and your engine power is greatly reduced.

Spark-plug fouling is common in older engines. While you won't notice spark-plug fouling so much in a high-powered car, it may still be there, the Shell people say. Such cars have so much more power than they need for ordinary driving that one cylinder can misfire occasionally with little noticeable difference, unless you are accelerating in high, or climbing a hill. But you will still be wasting fuel.

The TCP advocates claim that their additive neutralizes deposits on the plugs, thereby reducing their ability to conduct electricity and cause a short circuit. Thus, normal voltage builds up and a hot spark is provided to ignite the fuel mixture evenly and completely. It's a known fact that TCP successfully cured spark-plug fouling in the engines of the B-36, and in other aircraft.

The argument over which of the new gasolines is best won't be settled conclusively until they have been given

a full trial in many cars, under many conditions. Meanwhile you want to know what to do about your own gasoline buying. CAVALIER suggests the following four-point plan:

1. Owners of older cars can save money simply by sticking to regular gas.
2. If your car is a spark-plug eater, TCP gas is certainly worth a try.
3. If you do have a high-compression car, you should use high-octane gas, and it's worth trying different brands.
4. If you have been troubled by pre-ignition, try the TCP "two-tankful" test to see if it helps.

Here's why we suggest these policies: FIRST, if your car has only a modest compression ratio, and you experience little knock, or spark-plug fouling, you can save money by sticking to "regular-grade" gasolines. The average car owner buys 666 gallons a year. With the new wider spread of two-and-a-half to three cents a gallon, caused by the increase in the price of premium, you make a neat saving of \$17 to \$20 a year by burning regular. (Sometimes you save more because of the frequent price wars on regular grade. It fell to a record low of 13 cents recently in Pennsylvania.)

Actually, even regular today is comparatively "high test." It runs from 86 to 88 octane. When some of the older mod-

erate-compression cars on the road were built, regular gas was about 75 octane while premium was about 80. So, for many cars still operating, modern regular grade is the equivalent of what premium used to be. The only time higher-octane gas may be wholly useful for these cars is in a mountain country. When your car is frequently being "pushed," high-octane gasolines will give you better firing power than regular grades.

SECOND, if your car is a spark-plug eater, that is, if you find you have to change plugs more frequently than the normal 10,000 miles, by all means try one of the gasolines with TCP to see if it helps. There is enough evidence to show that it has some effect on the deposits that cause fouling.

THIRD, if you have a high-compression car, you should use high-octane gas (whether TCP is added or not) after you get over the 3,000 to 5,000 mile mark—at least if you want all the power your engine was built to give. These engines have tight clearances and terrific power. When they come off the assembly line, they can operate fine on regular-grade gasolines. But they are subject to what engineers call "ORI"—Octane Requirement Increase. If you continue to use regular grade they develop the now well-known 4,000 mile knock.

If your car is one of the more powerful new models, also consult your mechanic about your ignition timing. Some of the higher-compression engines have their timing retarded because up to now sufficiently high-octane gasolines were not available. Timing may need to be advanced to get full benefit from the increase in octane in the new gasolines.

FOURTH, if you've been troubled by pre-ignition, give TCP a fair trial. According to the Shell people, a "fair trial" means at least two tankfuls. They claim that by the time the second tankful is used, the deposits on plugs and in combustion chambers will be rendered harmless: "no more short-circuited power, no more pre-ignition ping or thud."

But you should be the judge of whether there is any noticeable improvement. When you try the TCP gas, particularly note if you can tell any difference when you accelerate, and when you climb steep hills.

With the above information you should be in a better position to select gasoline for your car. And be on guard against phony and meaningless claims for gasolines. One mid-west producer is advertising that his gasoline contains RTG, a new "secret" additive. But the Shell people say that the initials stand for nothing more than "Rarin' to Go." •



THOSE HOT-HEADED STEELHEADS

Continued from page 35

couldn't quite deliver their flies to the head of the eddy from where the flow would take them to the fish. One man finally quit. His partner soon followed him to shore.

"Do you think that coffee-grinder can reach 'em?" the second angler puffed, eyeing my spinning rod speculatively.

"I'm sure it can."

"Okay, my friend. That pool is yours!" Sighting at a spot 20 feet above the eddy, I side-armed a leaded Red Optic fly with a cast of slightly over 100 feet. Then, keeping my pick-up finger open, I held the rod almost level with the river and allowed the fly to drift back naturally. Natural drifts are duck soup for spinning lines in fast water. A light monofilament actually serves as one continuous piece of leader, minimizing the chances of frightening the fish with drag-friction.

When the fly rode into the eddy, I snapped the reel's pick-up finger shut and raised the rod to an angle of about 45 degrees. I felt a nudge, reined back with the rod, and had myself a five-pounder.

One of the anglers offered me double what I had paid for my spinning outfit.

There are two main schools of thought on how lures should be presented to steelies. I don't exactly know at what ratio opinions are divided. Many are firm in their conviction that lures should be drifted naturally, leaving it to the currents to lend them the illusion of reality. Others claim that lures should be fished

with additional motions imparted by twitches and yanks of the rod.

My experiences persuaded me that it would be a mistake to ignore either faction's advice when presenting a lure. I think the nature of the water itself plays the most important part. Whenever lower currents were strong enough to sweep my lures temptingly, I found invariably that no additional animation was necessary. In a few instances, however, I came across steelies lurking beyond the reach of the current's main sweep, places where the water went almost "dead." Then further action was needed to arouse the interest of fish. I was always surprised at how lazily a fish as savage as the steelhead chases artificially-excited lures in slack water.

One instance stands out vividly in my mind. I was standing alongside a deep, clear pool with a man from Minnesota. We spotted a big steelhead, maybe a 12-pounder, sides gleaming like chrome, lying over a gravel bar. "Take him," I said.

The Minnesotan was using a bamboo spinning rod a bit heavier than mine. He had on a "berry," a bait made by rolling salmon roe into pieces of moline. It was a seductive concoction, one that many Californians use. He cast it across the pool, let it sink to bottom, and began reeling in. The berry was two yards be-

yond the gravel bed when the steelhead, turning leisurely, went after it at a pace just fast enough to overtake it. He grabbed in a most undramatic fashion and began chewing. The angler set the hook, not too hard. The steelhead turned and swam a few feet, shaking his head as he went. He seemed annoyed that the force of the strike pulled the luscious tidbit from between his teeth to the side of his mouth, where he couldn't continue munching it. Finally he got it between his jaws again.

Meanwhile, the man from Minnesota, continuing his reeling, kept the steelhead coming in. There was no detonation, no wild, leaping run. Intent on chewing the berry, the steelhead merely wagged his head back and forth. The angler's hands grew less cautious. He took his eyes off the fish and regarded me with disgust.

"What kind of logs are these steelheads?" he sneered. "I thought they were supposed to be fighters!"

The steelhead must have seen the Minnesotan's movements and gestures. He had hardly finished uttering his scathing comments when the fish made a terrific lunge, rolled, plunged, and came up in a wild leap. Then he took off. The unprepared angler didn't have a chance. His line fouled around the bail of his reel, a fate worse than a backlash. Bamboo cracked and line parted. Dragging line behind him, the steelhead was last seen leaping over a long, shallow rapid.

Steelheads don't always show themselves so plainly to anglers, although they'll do so quite often. They'll also betray their whereabouts with telltale swirls and protruding fins. But the greater majority of those I landed had to be located through the time-honored system of deduction and elimination.

Some veteran steelhead fishermen creel

plenty of fish by finding a good spot and patiently remaining there, depending on the fact that new-run schools will eventually pass by. I'm not that patient. Especially when I'm fishing new waters which fascinate me. I like to move on and explore strange pools and riffles. It provides an exhilaration that flavors the sport.

Nevertheless, my trial-and-error methods soon developed into a system of working a pool. This proved successful whether I used a Golden Demon or a Russellure. All it amounted to was covering in four major steps an area in which I hoped there was a steelie. Quite often only one or two casts were necessary.

First, I'd cast to the nearest side of what looked like a good piece of holding water, float the lure to the end of the current's sweep, and retrieve. The next cast covered the same area more broadly: I'd merely throw the lure about 20 feet above the slack water and let it follow its natural course. Cast number three would send the lure to the far side, depending on undertow to roll it into the prospective fish-holding zone. My last cast would

be aimed at the lower fringe of the target area, so that the lure would sing into churning backwashes and display its wiles from yet another direction. Lures have to be seen from every direction when a steelhead hasn't quite made up his mind.

One of the most difficult places to spin out the submerged lure is where there are two or more boulders in a swift run of current. The spaces in between them are tough waters to fish. Yet steelheads are very fond of them. It is sometimes hard to sink a lure to the correct level in these places, but it can be done with a technique comparable to what fly-rodgers call "mending" line. Just keep the bail or pick-up finger of the reel open and play off slack loops of line until, with a suddenness that may startle you, the lure plummets downward.

Like many other newcomers to western waters, I was greatly surprised at how delicately steelheads take lures. Somehow one doesn't expect that of a fish so powerful and rambunctious. A steelie often strikes with a scarcely perceptible nudge and has the knack of spitting out a lure

so gently that you'll invariably miss him unless you respond to the slightest hesitation in the drift of your line.

If you feel inclined to doubt this, try fishing with salmon eggs in a riffle occupied by steelheads. Your reflexes have to be razor-sharp. If they're not, you'll spend most of the day in the messy chore of replacing clusters of goof.

Women are among the best goof-drifters of all the anglers I encountered on the Klamath. I remember one gal who caught three steelies while her husband failed to hook one.

"Look, honey," the wife finally said. "I'll watch your line for you, and you strike when I tell you to."

The husband cast his cluster of goof cross-current and stood there like a robot. His line was completing its swing when the woman yelled, "Strike!" He struck and tied into a nice three-pounder.

"Would you like to have me coach you?" the wife then asked me.

"No, thanks, ma'am," I declined. "The only way I like to see fish eggs served is in the form of caviar." •



ATHLETES ARE NOT SO TOUGH

Continued from page 23

turned to a heavy sweet cream diet, it would be impossible for him to gain weight. Yet I cannot convince him that his periodic excursions into strenuous sports have little to do with the consistency of his waistline.

Thousands of less athletic, overweight males between the ages of 30 and 50, go through the same self-torture. Yet scores of tests have proved conclusively that physical exertion is the slowest and least efficient way to reduce.

Researchers at the Harvard Fatigue Laboratory, analyzing the effects of exercise on weight loss, have found that marathon runners must cover 30-odd miles of track—two and a half hours of steady running—to burn up a scant 32 ounces of carbohydrates. Dr. Arthur H. Steinhaus of Chicago estimates that you would have to climb the Washington Monument 48 times to lose one pound of fat. Metropolitan Life Insurance Company figures show it takes about seven miles of walking to work off a banana split, five miles to burn up a candy bar.

Athletes have one temporary advantage over the guy who punches a clock or sells kiddy cars to expectant fathers. While in training, they are forced to get adequate rest and to maintain a body weight that produces a maximum of energy and a minimum of useless, harmful fat. This means better health, more power and sharper reflexes than most of us normally possess. But off training, Mr. Athlete tends to put on extra poundage, often runs rapidly to seed. Unless he holds to a schedule of calisthenics and proper diet, he will grow flabby faster than the average well-kept wage earner. Cases like that of Gunnar Haag, the mag-

nificent Swedish miler, who climbed from a gaunt 155 pounds to a chunky 200 the first year he dropped his amateur rating, can be listed by the yard. Boxing gyms abound with lardy ex-pugs once admired for their sharp rugged physiques. Little Jack Sharkey, who in his prime as a bantamweight weighed at 118, now supports a fantastic 200 pounds on his tiny frame.

Another false idea about athletes that has been soundly debunked, and from within their own ranks, is that one which had people thinking star performers are superior because they eat special foods. Because so many coaches and trainers had so many different ideas on what foods were good or bad for athletes, the American Medical Association took steps to clear the air of "old wives' tales" and set up a workable guide for the sports world. A team of experts from the Nutrition Department of the Harvard School of Public Health and Lou Little, head football coach at Columbia University, were invited to investigate the feeding problems.

"Feeding an athlete is basically no different from feeding an average citizen," says the report. "There are no magic foods which produce super-power or agility." The best food habits are those that provide a varied menu of meat, fish, eggs, milk, vegetables, fruits, whole grain and enriched breads and cereals. These, taken in the right quantities and supplemented by adequate rest and mental relaxation, add up to healthful living.

Exercise the way nature planned it, is a natural function that takes place automatically in the thousand habitual acts we perform to carry on the business of

living. It is a wonderful process, without which we should all become sickly, zombie-like creatures.

But strenuous exercise, unless it is tailored to the practical requirements of your living pattern, can tear you down faster than it can build you up. The muscular needs of a steel worker operating a power press in a foundry are somewhat different than those of the guy who operates the push-buttons in an elevator. If you are doing physically-light work, think twice before over-developing muscles that you may have little opportunity to use.

Today's Health, published by the American Medical Association, says, "It is unwise for the average person to carry around large and bulky muscles for which there is no daily use. This is not only unnatural, but may even prove detrimental." Even development of the whole body is more important for most men than one or two impressive-looking bulges.

Overdevelopment of the pectoral muscles (upper part of the chest), by causing a constant forward pull, often produces round shoulders. There is also the danger of binding free expansion of the chest wall, thus making it difficult to breathe deeply. This muscle-bound condition is often present in weight-lifters and gymnasts who support massive, powerful torsos. Distance runners and mountain climbers, on the other hand, because they depend upon wind endurance, have flexible chest muscles allowing free expansion of the rib cage.

Unless you've maintained a pretty steady habit of sports or vigorous exercise over a period of years, it's unwise and definitely unhealthy to throw all your physical assets into short spurts of athletics or strenuous gymnastics. This is especially true after the middle 30s, when the average man's insides can no longer take the kind of day-in-or-out treatment that youngsters thrive on.



THE SMUGGLERS WORE "FALSIES"

Keen-eyed guards at the gates of Madrid that summer of 1876 had never seen such a wealth of buxom ladies.

From early morning until the gates were closed, an ever-increasing stream of wondrously-endowed women strolled past their posts. "Ay, ay, ay!" the guards would exclaim. "Truly nature has been lavish in her generosity to these ladies. Surely there is no equals to them in all the world. It is beyond description. One must see to believe." And they would sigh and ogle the women as they entered the city.

If the guards had followed the women, their enthusiasm would have been deflated, for they were accomplices of one Monsieur Fourcarde, master smuggler, whose eye for beauty included a fond love for bright stacks of gold.

Fourcarde, a Frenchman by birth, supplied thousands of Madrid housewives with petroleum, or kerosene as it is known today. Petroleum was a comparatively new product and it was highly preferred over whale oil for lighting purposes. The merchant's profits were considerable on the legitimate market. But, being a smuggler as well as a merchant, Fourcarde sought to slip most of his petroleum into the city without paying what he considered an exorbitant octroi, or local tax.

"There must be a way," he told himself, "to get it in without giving the Spaniards half my profits."

Petroleum, unlike spices or lace, was bulky. Alert guards would detect and confiscate a barrel of petroleum carted to the gates underneath a pile of hay. It would be necessary, he reasoned, to pack the costly petroleum in small containers. Even this would be useless until he contrived a plan of concealing the packets from guards.

It is said by chroniclers of the time that Fourcarde's agile mind wrestled with the problem for many weeks. A buxom lady provided him with the necessary inspiration. Studying the lady as she entered his shop, Fourcarde observed that here was a creature with tremendous natural transportation facilities. Then he began to think about the members of the fair sex who did not have such expansive natural attributes.

"Why not engage those unfortunate women who are not buxom and pad them

with cleverly designed breasts containing petroleum?" he asked himself.

No sooner thought than done. The enthusiastic smuggler quietly recruited a group of women who definitely were not buxom. Special metal containers, rounded to fit the contours of the female figure, soon became standard smuggling equipment. Dozens of creatures of vast dimension—each carrying as much as a gallon of petroleum—soon were transporting large quantities of petroleum into the city.

The women, it is said, thoroughly enjoyed their work for now they were the object of many eyes as they went about their chores. Monsieur Fourcarde? He enjoyed being a wealthy man.

The rise and fall of the buxom smugglers is recounted in a letter written in 1878 by J. R. Lowell, then American minister to Spain, to Secretary of State William M. Evarts.

"Fourcarde hired all the lean and least mammalian women that could be found," Mr. Lowell wrote. "He made good all their physical defects with tin cans filled with petroleum, thus giving them what Dr. Johnson would have called the pectoral proportions of Juno."

For some time, the diplomat wrote, "These seeming milky mothers passed without question into the unsuspecting city and M. Fourcarde's pockets swelled in exact proportion to the breastworks of the improvised wet nurses."

The playful gallantry of a guard finally ended the illegal traffic—and put Monsieur Fourcarde behind bars.

The fine qualities of one of the ladies proved too much for a guard. As she passed his post, the ardent guard tapped the object of his admiration and—it tinkled.

In the words of the American minister, "He struck oil unawares and love shook his wings and fled as duty entered frowning."

It might be said, the diplomat continued, that "M. Fourcarde's perambulating wells suddenly went dry."

And it could be concluded that 100 or more unemployed smugglers beat their barren breasts and lamented the fate of the Frenchman who had given them temporary wealth and fleeting beauty.

—Bob Carpenter

Mature athletes know that a slow careful build-up of activity is required to condition them for the pace and strain of competition. Yet ball fields, tennis and handball courts are packed each spring with salesmen, civil service workers and pot-bellied business men who try in the space of a single week-end to recapture the zip and drive they had in their teens.

If you're not in shape, take it easy. Sports and exercise can be a wonderful way to relax your emotions, refresh your mind, smooth the knots of anxiety from your nervous system. But only if you approach your game in the spirit of fun, and with a broad tolerance of your own mistakes. Some men are such poor losers and tackle every competition with such life and death determination that they wind their nerves still tighter, freeze their muscles, put a triple strain on the heart and blood vessels and, in general, run themselves down to a fraction of their normal capacities. These blood batters, no matter what they may score in short-lived victories on the playing field, should learn to relax and enjoy themselves, or, if that is impossible, switch to something less strenuous, like horseshoe-pitching or scrabble.

The best sports for the average city-sheltered male are those which involve moderate rhythmic exercise, like swimming, skating and cycling. Dancing is triply beneficial; it provides gentle physical activity, music to relax nervous tension, and the stimulus of social contact with the opposite sex.

Unless you really enjoy them, don't go in for hyped-up methods of sparking vim, vigor and vitality. The guy who boasts about starting the day off with an ice-cold shower is not to be envied. The benefits he gains are mostly imaginary, but the damage can be physical. Listen to the opinion of Dr. Thurman B. Rice, Professor of Public Health at Indiana University:

"Millions of American males start the day in fear and trembling with a cold shower that shocks the nervous system, leaves them chilled and under par and causes them to become drowsy by mid-morning. They do it on the theory that it 'hardens' them, whereas in a majority of cases it actually makes them more susceptible to colds." Beginning your shower with hot or warm spray and then gradually shifting to cold—but not the kind that takes your breath away—is a good way to get that morning bracer without overtaxing your nervous system.

If you want an example of the proper combination of brawn and good living, don't look to the super-athletes. Many of them may be pathetic hospital cases 10 years from now. Take a trip to the zoo. Lions, tigers and other beasts of prey, capable of amazing speed and power, never subject themselves to needless, artificial exercise. They sleep as much as they can and are the world's best experts at staying limber and relaxed.

Old Man Hippocrates, Father of Medicine, said 2400 years ago, "The extreme development which athletes acquire is deceiving."

He spoke a mouthful. •



I CAUGHT A WITCH

Continued from page 20

I had never seen him before. He stood before me, said something, turned his back and spoke to the crowd. Then two young men came forward with a cast iron pot which they placed in the blazing fire. The old man reached into a hide bag he carried and dropped scraps of black stuff into the pot. Soon it smoked. One of the helpers poured water into it. There were clouds of fragrant steam. The old man began a hopping dance, about the fire, strewing things from his bag into it, leaning close to drop pieces of what looked like bark into the bubbling brew.

"This one old, too much," Sala whispered. "Big chief. Savvy *M'biam*!"

M'biam was the ancient God of these people. He was the great spirit, strong begetter, mighty hunter, great magician: the most powerful of their spirits. I watched him carefully. If this one had charge of this brew maybe I had a chance after all. I looked carefully at him. I watched his helpers. I saw a sly grin on the witch's face and my heart sank.

The old man dipped a gourd into the pot and tasted the steaming liquid. Then he leaped wildly into the air, rushing at the nearest *Fang*, slashing at them with his axe.

"Back!" he yelled. "*M'biam* is here! I hear him! *M'biam* comes! *M'biam* watches! Let all men fear!"

The people recalled into mumbling

groups around the edges of the compound. The old man spun, whirling in the dust, knotting his ancient body into frightful convulsions. Then, suddenly, he dropped, feet wide apart, hands beside him, head lolling. Then he began to speak, Sala translated.

"The spirits are here," he croaked. "They swim in the water; they sit in the palm; they float in the fire. All are here. *M'biam*, the great one is here. White man. Come here!" I realized with a shock that two young men were standing beside me. I stood up and walked between them to the fire. One stooped, ladled a gourd of the brew from the pot and handed it to the old man. He took it and held it out to me.

"If you are guilty of this crime..." The *Fang* moaned, their eyes staring through the fire smoke. "If you have sought the dead man's hurt..." They rocked, their moaning rising. "If you have sent another to seek the dead one's hurt... If you have employed one to make charms or cook bush... Or to put anything in his path, or to touch his food, or to touch his cloth, or to touch his goat, or to touch his fowl, or to touch his child... If you have prayed for his hurt. If you have thought to hurt him in your heart. If you ever, at any time, did any of these things, then, *M'biam* deal with you!"

There was deepest silence as the ancient held the steaming bowl to me. For an instant I believe I was hypnotized. I found myself looking down into the

opaque liquid and over it into the sly grin of the ancient.

"Drink!" he said. "Drink!"

"What you fear?" the witch yelled. "Drink!"

Then I got it. She'd bribed the old man to poison me! "Sala," I said, "tell the woman to come here."

She swaggered to face me. "Tell them this," I shouted. "This woman, too, is accused. Let her drink first. If she is innocent the drink will not harm her. Let her drink half the medicine and when she has finished I will drink the rest."

There was silence; then a babble of comment that rose to a roar. The people, many of them undoubtedly paying her tribute, yelled for her to drink. The old man held out the cup.

"Bushman!" she spat and knocked it out of his hands. Then she strode straight at the crowd. They fell back before her rage. She reached the river bank and yelled for her young boys, but they shuffled into the mob. Quickly she shoved the canoe into the stream, slid aboard and paddled swiftly downstream. Silently the *Fang* watched her disappear down the smooth river.

That evening I heard the talk drums. "They say," Sala translated, "that witch walks in the river. Let all towns watch lest she try to land."

"What will they do?" I asked.

"If an arrow can reach her, she will die," Sala told me. "If she can reach the white men at Campo, she will go safe. Unless the *n'tangan* will tell the *Govina* man of the chief who was killed."

I never heard that she made it to Campo. And in three days I was so busy with huge canoe loads of rubber, ebony and ivory that I forgot all about the witch—almost. •



THE BEAST IN KAKI

Continued from page 5

more Americans of that type, I will tell you about them."

Fortunately for the American prisoners Provoo's chances for collaborating with Fujita were cut short. The traitor was transferred to Bilibid in Manila on May 30, 1942. After a week there he was shifted again, this time to Karenko.

Provoo remained at Karenko for 10 months and during this period he served the Japs both as interpreter and informer. From Karenko he was moved to a camp on Formosa, Shirokawa. Here Provoo learned that America was doing much better in the war. Accordingly he took it easy on his pro-Japanese statements when other Americans were around.

The toning down of his statements was not followed by any cutting down of his double-dealings. Instead he got himself another, more important assignment from the Japs—that of broadcasting propaganda to the States.

Provoo threw all his energies into the radio job. This was living for him—another chance at radio and at acting! He played leading roles, wrote scripts and acted as master of ceremonies for derisive broadcasts against the United States. Radio Tokyo beamed this anti-American, anti-war propaganda to San Francisco, where it was duly recorded. By this time America was winning the war and the Japanese were hoping their propaganda could sway the American people into forcing an early armistice.

For his part in the work Provoo was well taken care of. He was assigned to live with other special POWs in a girls' school and was given unlimited freedom in Tokyo. He was a POW in name only.

Then the bubble burst. The war ended.

In time Provoo was repatriated, sent back to the states and, in 1946, was given

an honorable discharge at Camp Dix. A month later he re-enlisted with his old rating of staff sergeant.

Luck seemed to be with Provoo in those days, but the POWs from Corregidor had not forgotten. James Palone, the victim of the beating at the saki party, had spent an entire year looking for Provoo. Palone was still suffering from his time in prison camp—he had been classified as 100 per cent disabled—but he had armed himself and was prepared to kill the jackal when he found him. He didn't find him until after the others had acted—and by then it was too late to kill Provoo.

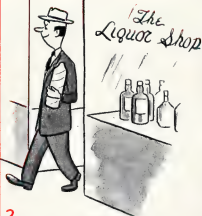
The other prisoners had taken a less definite but, as it proved, more effective way to bring Provoo to justice. They had bombarded the Army and the Department of Justice with accusations and in 1949 the FBI finally arrested Provoo on Governor's Island in New York. Then a New York Federal grand jury returned an indictment for treason.

From his cell in the Federal House of Detention in New York, Provoo started the defense methods he had talked about on Malinta. First he wrote a letter to his mother, although he knew she had been dead for four years, and asked another

... and everybody's happy



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.

inmate to mail it. The letter said in part:

"I don't want you to feel that I was railroaded; because, though it's a secret between God, you and myself, I am guilty."

The next step Provoov took was to offer a plea of guilty. Judge Harold R. Medina refused to accept this plea. Instead a series of psychiatric examinations was begun to determine if Provoov was legally sane. In every instance the psychiatrists reported that Provoov was capable of understanding the charges against him.

When that phase of the investigation had been cleared up, the government assigned legal aid to the traitor and the wheels began to grind. These government-assigned lawyers traveled some 60,000 miles, at taxpayers' expense, tracking down every bit of evidence that could help their strange client.

Finally in early 1953 Provoov was brought to trial before Judge Gregory F. Noonan and a jury in the Southern District of New York.

He was to be tried on 12 counts—two of which dealt with his offering his services to the Japanese, one with his treatment of Palone, one with the shiny boots incident, one with his attempted coercion of Col. Teague, one with the death of Capt. Thomson and five with his Radio Broadcast activities.

The evidence against Provoov was overwhelming. Sakakida, who had become a hero on Corregidor, told the story of the first day the Japs came to Manila; Sgt. Fujita, who was serving 30 years as a war criminal, told the story of Captain Thomson's murder; Palone, the grim avenger, described the saki party and the attempts to find where the silver was located; Colonel Teague told about the visit from Provoov and the Japanese officers.

Provoov took the stand in his own behalf and denied that he had given aid and comfort to the enemy. His answers were evasive and cunning. He was Provoov, the actor, every minute he was in the witness chair. He paused and posed before he answered questions and he ranted and raged when he was tripped up in cross examination.

The trial lasted six weeks. The jury deliberated two days. The verdict returned was guilty on four counts. These four counts included two of the broadcasting counts, the Capt. Thomson count and one of those dealing with his offer of aid to the Japanese.

On March 4, 1953 Provoov stood in front of Judge Noonan and said, "I had the great misfortune to fall under the influence of an alien spiritual ideology while I was still a child. My conversion commenced before the outbreak of war in the Far East. But like so many other matters the past won't have done with us so quickly or so easily. I couldn't very well change the philosophical outlook or the concepts that I had so avidly learned to bear as a child—before I knew any better.

"I was not responsible for the death of Captain Thomson nor for the other acts charged. The death of Captain Thomson was a complete misunderstanding. I had

to carry out the orders of the Japanese or I too might have been killed.

"I wish at this time to avow my allegiance to the United States even though, by virtue of the verdict of the jury here, I lost the rights and prerogatives of citizenship."

Judge Noonan, who could have im-

posed a death sentence, explained why he did not choose to do so. "Traitors are to be despised," he said, "yet in my mind, there are attendant circumstances which distinguish this case from traitorous and seditious acts perpetrated within the sanctuary of our nation. The acts of this defendant under consideration were

spawned in an aura hard to describe, hard to understand, and brought about by the occupation of an overwhelming and vicious enemy."

Then the sentence was passed—life imprisonment and a fine of \$10,000.

The men of Corregidor had been revenged. •



COURTROOM CASANOVA

Continued from page 29

because Innes had considered it expedient to get her out of the way, too.

Poking around the general neighborhood of the bungalow, not knowing exactly what he was looking for but feeling that he would recognize it when he saw it, Marshall Nelms spotted a hardware store. There he learned that a man answering the description of Victor Innes had, around the first of June, purchased two large butcher knives and a meat grinder. The grisly use to which Victor Innes had put his purchases was obvious. The butcher knives had been used to cut up the bodies. The meat grinder had been used to reduce the pieces of flesh and bones beyond the realm of possible identification. Placing himself in the role of Innes, Marshall Nelms began to speculate on what the man had done, and where he had gone after committing the double murder. What, for example, had Innes done with those two butcher knives and that meat grinder? Nelms hunted high and he hunted low, but the three utensils were nowhere in sight. Obviously Innes had taken them with him.

It was at the railroad freight station that Marshall Nelms hit what the cliché experts would call pay dirt. There he uncovered a record of W. W. Cavanaugh having shipped a small box to himself in care of General Delivery, Eugene, Oregon. According to the freight records, the box had contained "books."

In Eugene, Marshall Nelms sat in the office of the sheriff, his hat in his hand, spinning his gory tale to two deputies. The deputies knew W. W. Cavanaugh. The man had, with his little wife, purchased a costly ranch some 12 miles outside of town a year or so previously.

At first the deputies were inclined to mark Nelms down as an overly-suspicious, screwballish character. But there was something compellingly sincere about the fellow that finally prompted the deputies to agree to accompany him to Cavanaugh's ranch.

Cavanaugh couldn't have been more cordial to the two deputies. But he treated Nelms like dirt under his Western boots. The whole thing was preposterous, this little man coming out to invade his privacy and making these terribly dark and suspicious remarks about him. Why, if the whole thing weren't basically a grim joke, he'd half a mind to sue this fellow Nelms for defamation of character.

It was while Cavanaugh was charming the two deputies that Nelms slipped from sight. Cavanaugh was so busy in fact, pouring on the old oil in a desperate attempt to convince the deputies of the spuriousness of Nelms' charge that he didn't notice Nelms slipping away. And that, as it turned out, was a fatal mistake. In about 10 minutes Nelms came back—yelling and holding a box. "Look what's in this box!" he was saying to the deputies. "He shipped this box from San Antonio and marked it books and hasn't gotten around to getting rid of what's in it. And look what's in it. Just look!" He handed the box to one of the deputies.

Although a label on the outside of the box said "Books" what was in the box were the two butcher knives and the meat grinder. All three utensils were stained by blood. Human blood? "Ridiculous," W. W. Cavanaugh was saying to the two deputies. "It's animal blood. I've slaughtered some animals here on my ranch."

"Then why did you lie about what was in that box when you shipped it up here from San Antonio?" Nelms screamed.

Cavanaugh just stood there, feeling sorry for the distraught little man. Then he made a mistake. He tried to take the box away from the deputy who was holding it. "No you don't!" said the deputy. Now as the deputy studied the big man, he saw that his composure had left him. The suspect was dripping with sweat and guilt.

Extradited to San Antonio to account for the fate of the Nelms sisters, W. W. Cavanaugh and his bleak little wife were held without bail. The two knives and the meat grinder were identified by the hardware dealer as the utensils he had sold to Innes. The blood on the instruments and the splashes on the wall in the bedroom of the bungalow were identified as human blood. The shoe found in the remains of the fire in the back yard was identified by the Atlanta bootery as that of Beatrice Nelms, and the locket as that of Eloise.

Nelms and his mother appeared before a grand jury probing the riddle and filled the jurors in with the whole background of the case. Then the jurors indicted Victor Innes and his wife for the murders of the Nelms sisters.

Was Victor Innes, conducting his own defense from jail, worried? He was not. Poring over law books, he sent a

blizzard of briefs from his cell. Under the statutes of the Lone Star State, he artfully pointed out, a man couldn't be convicted of murder unless the State established a *corpus delicti* or produced at least one reliable witness who had seen it. There were none around. And so the authorities had nothing to do but release Innes and his wife.

But Marshall Nelms was keeping a step ahead of the Blind Goddess. The very day Innes and his wife were released from jail in San Antonio, they were nabbed for extradition to Georgia. There they were placed on trial for swindling Eloise Nelms out of that 25 grand. Mrs. Innes drew three years in prison. Her handsome husband drew seven years in the notorious Georgia chain gang.

Marshall Nelms still was not through with Innes and his wife. They may have gotten away with murder but they had not gotten away from him. While they were serving their terms for the swindle, Nelms badgered the United States Government into indicting them for using the mails to defraud—a charge that arose out of Eloise, at the suggestion of Innes, twice writing to her bank from Carson City to get money that was used in the swindle. The bank still retained her letters for their records. The mail-fraud statute is very elastic. It specifies that a person has violated the law when he causes an innocent person to use the mails in the furtherance of a fraud—and Innes had done just that.

Mrs. Innes never faced the mail fraud charge. When she had finished her prison term, she was suffering from tuberculosis and died not long afterward. But when Innes was sprung from the chain gang, he was tried for mail fraud—the trial being held in Georgia since Eloise had sent the letters from that state—convicted, and sent to Atlanta for five years.

Victor Innes, the man who got away with murder, was released from prison in 1927, at the age of 66. The years had caught up with him. While he had, at 50, looked like a man in his late 30s, at 66 he looked like a man 10 years older.

What Victor Innes had ever done with the money he had taken from Eloise Nelms, and from other victims, has never been revealed. Being a high liver and a gambler, Innes probably got rid of the dough almost as fast as he extracted it from his victims. At any rate, he wasn't in good financial shape when he was pinched on the ranch. The ranch was mortgaged to the hilt and reverted to its previous owner while Innes was on the chain gang.

The fate of Victor Innes remains, to this day, an enigma. After serving his second prison term, he just walked into the silences. •



THE GREAT SNAFU

Continued from page 32

"Wind hell! It sounds like an elephant," shouted Barboni. "Send somebody out here."

"There's nobody to send," said Keen. "Go out and see what's there."

"You won't catch me going out in that dark swamp," said Barboni. "Now listen here, Keen. You're supposed to tell the Sergeant of the Guard to come running when something like this comes up."

"Don't tell me what I'm supposed to do," said Keen. "Skits isn't here, and I can't be chasing out every time one of you guards gets nervous."

"Well, I'm telling you—somebody better do something," said Barboni.

Keen thought for a moment. He didn't want to go himself because he was doing fine at the poker table. "Listen, Barboni," he said. "I'll call Pernell, the ramp guard, and have him hop on a tug and come out to you. Sit tight."

"Get him over here in a hurry," said Barboni. "I'll leave this place to the birds if somebody doesn't come soon."

"Okay," said Keen and he hung up. He had the operator ring the phone in the hangar. When Pernell answered, Keen said, "I just had a call from Barboni out at the dump. He's heard some noise out there and he's wetting himself. You hop on a tug and go calm him down."

"I can't leave the ramp, can I?" said Pernell.

"You won't be gone five minutes," said Keen. "Nobody else is around to go, so get on out there and call me when you get back."

"Okay," said Pernell. "If you say so." Corporal Keen hung up the phone and went back to the poker table.

Skits was still sitting in the jeep waiting when he heard the sound of a tug coming, and a few minutes later Pernell turned down the road and came alongside.

"What the hell are you doing here?" said Skits.

"Keen sent me," said Pernell, turning off the engine of the tug. "He said Barboni wants help."

"You shouldn't have left those ships unguarded," said Skits. "Barboni must have heard Lt. Breen out there. He's creeping up on him."

"You don't mean it," Pernell said. "Let's go warn him."

"No, the lieutenant ordered me to sit here and wait."

"How long has he been gone?"

"I don't know, quite awhile, I think," said Skits. He was quiet a moment and then he added, "He's been gone an awful long time come to think of it. He should be back by now."

"Maybe there is something out in that swamp," said Pernell.

The two men looked into the darkness, and then Skits said, "We'll wait a little

longer—the guy is probably crawling there on his hands and knees."

When Barboni saw the lights of a jeep coming up the road, he hurried out to meet it, his .45 in one hand and his flashlight in the other. The jeep stopped and Skits and Pernell climbed out.

"Has Lt. Breen showed up?" asked Skits.

"Nobody showed up, but something's out in that swamp."

"It's the lieutenant," said Skits. "He's slipping up on you to see if you're asleep."

"How could anyone sleep with all that noise," said Barboni. Then he realized what Skits had said. "You mean that bastard was trying to catch me asleep?" He suddenly threw his gun on the ground and jumped up and down on it.

"Hey, cut that out," said Skits.

"What a chance I missed," shouted Barboni. "I could have shot him. I would have legally shot him dead, and they would have shipped me off this field. What a chance I missed!"

Just then a wail came from the swamp. It was a strange, haunting wail, as if a man was falling into an abyss. Then there was an unmistakable cry for help.

"Some animal has him," said Barboni.

"Let's go," Skits drew his gun and started into the swamp.

"Wait, maybe it's a bear has him," said Barboni. "I hear there's a bear around here. Leave them fight it out."

"Come on," called Skits, "that's an order."

The three men started into the forest, flashing their lights out ahead of them to avoid the marshy areas. There was a faint rattle of machine-gun fire on the other side of the airfield as the ammunition in the B-29 went off, but the men were too intent on their search to hear it. They discovered Lt. Breen at about the time the gas tanks on the B-29 went up in flames, but they were too deep in the forest, and too shocked at what they found, to see the tower of flame exploding up into the sky.

They came upon Lt. Breen, or rather upon his head and shoulders, protruding out of a mudhole. His head was turning round like a mole's seeking daylight, for his glasses were gone. He was hanging on to the limb of a tree to keep himself from sinking further into the quicksand-like marsh, and letting out cries for help. While creeping among the trees, he had slid and some brush caught his glasses and flung them. Without his glasses Lt. Breen couldn't see the end of his nose, and he had been stumbling about feeling the ground and looking for the lost glasses until he finally slid into the mudhole and was forced to call for help.

The three men grabbed his arms and pulled him up on solid ground. His uniform was black from the waist down, and there were streaks of mud on his face

where he had rubbed his eyes. He was a bedraggled wreck and even Barboni was a little embarrassed at the sight of him. Skits took a quick look around for the glasses and couldn't find them. Then they stood the lieutenant up and helped him out of the forest to the jeep.

As they climbed into the jeep Lt. Breen pulled his dignity together and said, "Return me to my quarters, Sergeant."

Skits started the engine of the jeep, and Lt. Breen suddenly called out: "I don't want this episode mentioned to anyone. That's an order. Pvt. Barboni, where are you?"

Barboni, who was standing by the jeep about two feet away, said, "Here."

"Report to my office first thing in the morning," said Lt. Breen, and he gave a grand wave of his hand. "Drive on, Sergeant."

Skits dropped Pernell off at his tug, and drove up the edge of the field to Lt. Breen's barracks. He helped the lieutenant into his quarters and found his extra pair of glasses for him. Once again able to see the world, the lieutenant said, "I shall retire now, Sergeant, I believe the field is secure for the night. I'm not to be disturbed again."

"Yes sir," said Skits, and he returned to the guardhouse where he learned that a B-29 had burned up while he was out in the swamp.

The next morning Lt. Breen, fresh, clean, and in a new uniform, stepped out of his barracks and met the PX officer coming up the walk.

"Some fire, wasn't it?" said the PX officer. "I'm glad it didn't happen while I was O.D."

Lt. Breen looked at him coolly. He had never approved of the PX officer, who, he was sure, tended to treat his military duties lightly. "What fire?" he said.

"Ha, ha, what fire indeed," said the PX officer. "Leave it to you to treat the loss of a '29 lightly, Breen. You live on a big scale." Chuckling to himself, the PX officer went on to his quarters while Lt. Breen stared after him thoughtfully. Then he went to the mess-hall and discreetly discovered that there had been a great fire the night before.

The Commanding Officer returned that day, and the First Sergeant went up to his home and told him about the fire.

"Well, it was an old job anyhow," said the C.O., which was true. Like most planes at Cola Field it had been brought back from Korea after doing its missions. The flack and bullet holes in it were patched up with little pieces of tin and it was sent home to serve as a training ship.

"Even so," said the First Sergeant, "we ought to have some kind of an investigation, don't you think? Someone will wonder why it burned up."

"Of course," said the C.O., and he immediately ordered an inquiry into the cause of the fire and into the efficiency with which the emergency was handled. He appointed Lt. Breen as the committee of inquiry.

Lt. Breen immediately decided that the crisis had been handled perfectly, and that it was a case of sabotage by Communist agents. He became exasperated

when he couldn't find evidence to support either assumption. He spent an entire day going over the ashes of the aircraft with a magnifying glass, but he was unable to provide any proof of sabotage. He had no eye witnesses, of course, for the ramp guard who might have observed the start of the fire had been busy out in the swamp. In the official report Lt. Breen was forced to say the cause of the fire was unknown, but he hinted darkly that such conflagrations do not start of themselves. The report was a masterpiece in its way, for it showed Cola Field operating at top efficiency that night. Lt. Breen thought it was so brilliantly written he kept a copy of it in his desk so that he could take it out and read it occasionally.

But another important event had happened even before Lt. Breen was appointed to conduct the inquiry. Right after the lieutenant heard about the fire, Barboni came to his office as ordered.

Next Lt. Breen looked at him for a moment in silence, then said briskly, "Pvt. Barboni, have you mentioned that incident at the gas dump to anyone?"

"Not yet," said Barboni.

Lt. Breen leaned back in his chair and put the tips of his fingers together. "Pvt. Barboni," he said, "are you aware that the forces of the United Nations are fighting a death struggle in Korea?"

"I've heard some mention of it," said Barboni. "Somebody told me that's why they called me up."

"We must win this war," said Lt. Breen, striking the desk with his fist. "Everything else fades away in the light of this task before us."

Barboni looked at him uneasily.

"So when our nation is at war, we must make sacrifices, Barboni," said the lieutenant solemnly. "We must not only extend our full effort, we must give up those small pleasures, those bits of entertainment which in calmer times we have a right to enjoy. Isn't that true?"

"Of course," said Barboni.

"Well then, I have no doubt that last night's episode might prove an entertaining anecdote for your fellow soldiers. I'm sure that because of your feelings toward me you might enjoy telling it."

"I might at that," said Barboni.

"But think a moment, Pvt. Barboni," said Lt. Breen, lifting his finger. "Think a moment of the danger to discipline and morale. Morale is all important, and should you, by telling this anecdote and perhaps embroidering it with a few added details, lower the morale of the men and put into their minds a feeling of ridicule toward their superior officers, you would be endangering your nation, Barboni. Do you understand Pvt. Barboni?"

"Absolutely," said Barboni.

"Well then," Lt. Breen smiled, "I'm glad to find you so cooperative. I must

confess I hadn't expected it. We can consider the matter forgotten then?"

"Of course," said Barboni. "I wouldn't have time to mention it anyhow, because I'm shipping out tomorrow."

"Shipping out?" said Lt. Breen.

"Yes, and getting a thirty-day furlough to help me on my way."

"Furlough? You had one a month ago."

"I know," said Barboni.

"Well then," said Lt. Breen. "I might arrange for you to ship out tomorrow, in fact I had been rather planning that, but you can't expect a furlough."

"Can't I?" said Barboni. Then he added softly, "Only this morning one of the men was asking me where you were during the fire, and I restrained myself, Lt. Breen. I bit my lips to keep from describing how you were standing in that mudhole and crying out—"

"Just a moment," interrupted Lt. Breen. He looked thoughtfully out the window and said, "Of course, if it could be considered an emergency furlough."

"It's an emergency all right. I haven't slept with a woman in a month."

Barboni left the next morning. He kept the secret about Lt. Breen and the mudhole pretty well too. Since he only mentioned it to a couple of close friends, it was probably two days before every man on the field knew where Lt. Breen was during the great fire. •



GADGET GUNS MEAN MURDER

Continued from page 17

would do until many years later. The pepper box was heavy and unreliable.

Henry Derringer, Jr., made neat little percussion single-shot pistols with barrels from two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half inches long, from .40 to .50-caliber. Even his baby model, with a barrel less than two inches long and an overall length of about four inches, was .41-caliber. You could carry one in your pocket and hardly know it was there, yet it packed a wallop.

These pistols struck the fancy of men who thought they might need to defend themselves with a gun, and the number of men who felt that way in the 1840's and 1850's seems to have included the entire male population.

Henry Derringer's pistols were in such demand that his success encouraged many imitators. When the metallic cartridge made breech loading workable, many well-known arms makers went in for what they usually called "derringers," although there were several other mispellings of the originator's name.

Colt and Remington, Forehand & Wadsworth, and Hopkins & Allen all made derringers. The Remington double-barreled derringer, one barrel over the other, was especially popular around the turn of the century and was made until about 1910. The first pull of

the trigger fired the top barrel of the Remington and the second pull fired the lower barrel. The gun was simple, sturdy and light in weight. A New York dealer in old arms, Robert Abels, told me he sold all the Remington derringers of this model that he could dig up to American officers going overseas during World War II.

A variety of repeating pistols were designed in this country to get the firepower of the Colt revolver. One of these was made by Smith & Wesson. Their repeating pistol carried the cartridges in a tube under the barrel and was operated by a finger lever. It failed as a gun because the ammunition was bad and the action wasn't really suited to a pistol because it took both hands to work it. But when adapted to metallic cartridges and made in shoulder form it became the Henry rifle and, with a slight improvement, the first Winchester.

Remington made a little repeating pistol with the ammunition in a tube under the barrel. This looks as if it has two hammers but one of the spurs is a lever that operates the mechanism. Pulling this lever back extracts the fired cartridge case and brings up a new cartridge from the magazine. It isn't too easily op-

erated with one hand and the cartridge, a very short .32 rim-fire, is weak.

The Crispin revolver, patented in 1865, has a cylinder closed at the breech but hinged in the middle. Instead of a rim at the rear to hold the priming mixture, the Crispin cartridge had a rim around its middle. The cartridges were pushed into the rear half of the cylinder up to the middle rim. Then the gun was closed and the front half of the cylinder housed the front ends of the cartridges up to the middle rim.

Colt adopted the Thuer alteration which made it possible to load a revolver with cap and ball or with a special cartridge that could be put in the front end of the cylinder.

Herschel Logan illustrates one starting revolver, the Christ, in his book *Hand Cannon to Automatic*. This had two barrels and two rows of chambers around the cylinder, the inner row consisting of six chambers and the outer row of 12. The loads in the outer row fired through the top barrel and those in the inner row through the lower barrel.

Guns for odd purposes go back to the earliest times. Remington used to make a burglar alarm that could be fastened to a door jamb or a window. If the door was opened, the gun would fire.

Guns shooting tar gas were made in this country between the two world wars and many police departments bought them. One type was hardly intended for police use since it was no bigger than a fountain pen and was made to look like one. During World War II the Germans made what they called *scheintot* pistols. The "appearance-of-death" pistols used a gas that rendered a man unconscious.

The German round-the-corner rifle must be called a gadget gun. It is made in two forms, one with a barrel bent at a 30-degree angle and one with the barrel bent to 45 degrees. These bent barrels are rifled.

The barrel bent to 45 degrees was designed for tank use. This gun made it possible for the Germans to shoot at men close to their tank without exposing

themselves. The barrel bent to a 30-degree angle was developed for snipers and for grenade launching. The Germans fired it without exposing their hands.

How did they sight such a gun? With mirrors, of course. Or, more accurately, with an optical prism sight. Why didn't the bullet go through the side of the barrel when it hit the sharp curve instead of following the bore? Because it met

less resistance when it followed the bore. Maybe the time has come when a Chicago gangster can stand on the north side of Madison Street, close against a building, and shoot another gangster coming down Wabash Avenue while the other guy is still out of sight around the corner. If so, it should go big in the movies the first time it is shown. After that, of course, it will be old stuff. •



SOLVED: MYSTERY OF BUTCH CASSIDY'S END

Continued from page 9

was no such thing as drinking or gambling or shooting up the town."

The cattle were sold at La Paz. The money bought fine horses, equipment and ammunition; part of it was used to bribe minor officials of small towns who later hid Cassidy and Longabaugh or passed on false information to the authorities.

And on an April morning, shortly thereafter, Butch, Longabaugh and Etta rode into the town of Mercedes, Province of San Luis, in central Argentina. Apparently all plans for respectability had been dismissed; the present project was a bank holdup.

At noon, when most of the bank employees were at lunch, Butch and Longabaugh entered the building.

"Levante las manos!" Butch ordered. The banker obediently raised his hands. Then, foolishly, he leaped for a rifle. One shot put him out of action. No one knows whether it was fired by Cassidy or Longabaugh. Whatever the case, the robbery brought the equivalent of \$20,000. The bandits galloped to where Etta waited with fresh horses.

"How did you make out?" she asked. "Let's ride," Butch said, laughing. "We got a sack of it. Maybe you'll wear silk in Buenos."

But Etta didn't see Buenos Aires. After hiding out for a couple of months, the trio hit the town of Bahía Blanca, some 500 miles south of the great city. Another bank job; another \$20,000. This time, however, a posse—or the South American version of such a group—thundered out after the bandits.

Cassidy, riding hard, saw that they were gaining. Twisting in the saddle, he snapped a shot at the leader. The man's horse went down; and the chase was over. The posse decided life was worth living.

"Hate to shoot a horse," Cassidy told Longabaugh, "but I don't like people breathing down my neck."

Some months later, the strange trio rode into the Bolivian frontier town of Eucalyptus to hold up a payroll train at the Eucalyptus station. Cassidy was now using the alias, Jim Maxwell. Señor Don Max, the Indians called him.

In this robbery, Cassidy used the same tactics that had served him so well back in the states: hold up the engineer of a train, force him to run the express car

some distance from the rest of the equipment, and break into the safe. The total haul this time was worth about \$30,000.

While Cassidy and his companions hid out south of the Bolivian frontier, Di-Maio was still busy. His energy was contagious; the police chief of Buenos Aires had put out informers to check on Cassidy's movements. Butch was beginning to feel the pressure; warnings for him to start riding came more frequently. To make matters more complicated, Etta became ill. It was evident that she required an operation, but she refused to permit a native doctor to touch her. She insisted on returning to the United States.

Butch later told Seibert how he and Longabaugh decided who was going to take her back. In the lamplight of the cabin where they were hiding, they drew straws; the Sundance Kid drew the short one. They split the money between them. Etta kissed Butch goodbye and then set out with Longabaugh. The girl was apparently operated on in Denver for appendicitis. The Kid paid the bills.

Etta remained in the States. No one knows what became of her. In all likelihood, she became respectable.

Longabaugh rejoined Cassidy in Bolivia. They talked over plans, and decided to work as honest men for a while. The best bet was to lose themselves in the gangs working the Bolivian mines.

In the Spring of 1907, they appeared at the Concordia Tin Mines, 90 miles southeast of La Paz, to be hired as mule buyers. It was here that Cassidy first met Percy Seibert.

Cassidy's first job was to buy 20 mules at La Paz. He carried out the mission efficiently, and even returned \$50 to Clement Glass, superintendent of the mine. There's nothing mysterious about this bit of honesty; the entire history of Cassidy shows that when he worked he worked faithfully.

Cassidy met Seibert and liked the young man from New York who had been Commissary General of the Bolivian Railroad Commission for the Study of Railroads in 1905. Seibert had just returned from the States.

Both Seibert and Glass suspected that Cassidy and Longabaugh had been in trouble with the law back in the United States; but they asked no questions.

There was ample confirmation in the gun handling of the two men.

One afternoon a discussion of shooting arose; and the Sundance Kid casually mentioned how he and "Max" used to practice by tossing up bottles and breaking them before they reached the ground. Glass laughed politely.

"Let's show him," Longabaugh said.

The three went outside. The Kid and Cassidy checked their Colts, returned them to the holsters, and picked up two bottles. They crouched like mountain cats, then tossed the bottles into the air. Guns flashed—bottles shattered.

Longabaugh was tickled by the amazed look on the spectators' faces. He decided to demonstrate how he defended himself against a gunfighter. He whirled, drawing so rapidly that the movement was a blur, and smashed a bottle behind him.

"Glass was an excellent shot and I wasn't bad," says Seibert, "you had to be those days—but that was real shooting."

Eight months later, Glass learned the truth about his two astonishing workers. An engineer, who had recently been in Buenos Aires, had seen wanted posters. He identified Cassidy and Longabaugh.

It was late at night. The superintendent decided to have a showdown. Picking up a rifle, he walked up the trail to the cabin shared by the two outlaws.

He stood outside for a moment, then banged on the door. After a while, a lamp flickered inside. The door opened. Cassidy had answered the knock; Longabaugh, gun in hand, was still in his bunk. Both men were alert—and dangerous.

"Why, Mr. Glass," Butch said. "What's wrong?"

"Just this, Cassidy. I know who you and your friend are."

Butch smiled and shrugged. "You've been good to us. We'll pull out."

On the following morning, he rode up to the administration shack and waved a nonchalant goodbye to Seibert.

"Take care of yourself, kid," he called.

And now Butch began to have a change in his luck. He and the Sundance Kid rode to Tirapatti, Peru, with the idea of holding up the Inca Gold Mine transport.

But Fred Brown, mine superintendent, heard that outlaws were in the area. He sent out a bullion box filled with ore. When Butch and Longabaugh rushed the wagon and shouted the traditional, "Throw down the box!" the driver obliged. Butch fired a shot over the man's head to speed him on the way.

But when the box was opened, it was found to contain the ore—worth a few cents at the most. The outlaws looked at each other and shrugged.

"Let's ride into town and get a drink," Longbaugh said philosophically.

For the next year, Butch raided and fought off the gathering forces of corregidores (law officers) and soldiers who had been alerted against him. But however bitter he was toward his enemies, he was invariably good to his friends.

Once he and the Kid met a man named Reese who worked in the administrative offices at Concordia. They rode together, chatting amiably. That night, Butch appeared at the Concordia dining tent.

"There's a gentleman here who wants to talk to Mr. Reese," he called.

Reese came out and Butch, in his curious way, told him he planned to steal the mine's payroll.

"Good God, Butch!" Reese cried. "That would be the end of me. People saw us riding together."

Butch thought it over. Then he quietly said, "Forget it, Mr. Reese."

And that was the end of it.

In April of 1910, Cassidy and Longbaugh held up the payroll mule train of the Apolca Silver Mine. It was to be the last strike.

At the time of the robbery, the two men were working on the Hutchinson ranch near the Río Marquez railroad on the Argentine border. After Cassidy had established the time of departure for the train, he struck. It was an easy job, the "mozo" gave up the payroll without a fight. Butch filled his petaca (a small horsehide trunk) with gold, and rode back to the Hutchinson ranch.

A week after the robbery, Hutchinson's brother went into Tupiza, Bolivia, for supplies. He heard about the robbery and from the descriptions recognized at once that the thieves were Cassidy and Longbaugh.

He rode back to the ranch and told his brother. The two men walked over to the bunkhouse, guns in hand. Cassidy and Longbaugh didn't move when the Hutchinsons accused them.

"Well, the hell with it," Cassidy drawled at last. "If these here boys are upset, we might as well move along."

While the Hutchinsons watched, the two men loaded their gold on a mule, put their gear on another and rode away—waving. The Hutchinsons found themselves waving back.

"They were scoundrels but pleasant ones," they later told Seibert. "You knew they were outlaws, but you hated to see them get caught."

Butch and the Sundance Kid rode into the village of San Vicente, 15 miles west of the Hutchinson ranch, the next day. They pulled up at the local inn which had a bar in the patio. After piling rifles and gear against a wall, they walked to the far side of the patio where the food was prepared.

Unknown to the outlaws, the owner of the hotel was also the local corregidor. He recognized one of the mules, an oddly colored beast, as the property of the superintendent of the Aramayo Mines.

While his wife served food from the hearth, the hotel owner rode to a neighboring village where he knew a company of Bolivian cavalry had camped. The

YOU CAN BUILD THIS MOBILE TV TABLE



If you own a table model television set, this mobile table should interest you. Fitted with rubber casters it is easy to move and the cost should not exceed \$20.

In addition to providing mobility, this table has space for a large speaker directed to the front instead of to the side as in most table-model TV sets.

All dimensions will have to be adapted to the size set you have. Matching $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. plywood veneer was used on the sides, but not on the top or bottom where a less expensive $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. plywood was sufficient. The side panels extend beyond the bottom section to conceal the casters.

To provide added strength, triangular pieces of $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. pine are glued and screwed into the four rear corners of the box-like structure. A $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. plywood board in front has a hole to accommodate the speaker. I used a 12-in. speaker of the permanent magnet type that cost about \$8.

For the face of the TV table a matching molding strip can be bought at any picture-framing store. This molding is glued in place and then nailed. A strip of wood 3 in. wide and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick is cut to cover the bottom.

Four 2-in. rubber casters are screwed to the bottom section. These should be set in from the sides of the box to permit free rotation. Ball bearing casters are best for the job.

The next step is to tack a piece of fabric over the front speaker board. The big speaker is then screwed in place.

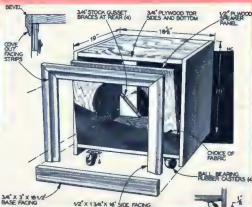
A jack is used to connect the large speaker. When a plug is inserted, the jack disconnects the small side speaker and transfers the sound to the larger speaker in front. If you prefer, the small speaker can be disconnected permanently in favor of the larger speaker. Be sure that the speaker you install is of suitable capacity for the circuit.

The TV set must not be placed flush against the table top because there is a ventilator in the bottom of the set to help dissipate the heat. The photo at the top of this page gives an idea of the amount of air space necessary for proper ventilation.

There are few table-model TV sets that would not be improved in appearance when mounted atop this table which converts them into an attractive console. •



If you follow this diagram, building TV table becomes simple carpentry job. Above: Jack at back of set disconnects small speaker, switches on large one at front.



cavalry reached the hotel in a big hurry.

Inside the patio, Butch and the Sundance Kid were drinking native beer. As Butch raised a glass, he saw a soldier's head above the rim of the low wall.

"Trouble!" he shouted, and tipped over the table. Both outlaws threw themselves behind it.

In broken English, the captain of the company called, "Yankee bandits, you surrender to the soldiers."

"Come and get us," Longabaugh yelled back. To Cassidy, he said, "I'll get the gent on the wall."

"Try for the officers," Cassidy advised. The Kid's first shot sent a soldier off the wall. Another jumped up to receive a bullet through his forehead.

The captain, a short, squat man, held up his sword ready to charge through the gate. As he started to run, Butch's shot spun him around. He fell, his sword

clattering to the ground. His lieutenant was racing for the gate when a bullet shattered his kneecap.

Finally, the inevitable happened. Ammunition ran out. Across the patio were the rifles and supplies. With them, they felt certain they could hold off a regiment. Perhaps, in the darkness, they could fight their way out.

The Kid made the attempt. Crouching, he dashed from cover, but halfway across the patio he was hit, not once but several times. With one last effort he lunged forward, then fell dead, in easy reach of the precious rifles.

"Like a bloody fountain," the lieutenant later said.

Butch saw it all, and we can assume that he watched in an agony of loss. Except for Matt Warner, of the early Western days, Longabaugh had been his best friend. Oddly enough, there is no clear

record that Butch ever killed prior to his last stand; but one can readily imagine his fury when the Sundance Kid died.

Cassidy had one bullet left. The lieutenant ordered flares lighted and tossed into the patio. They silhouetted weirdly the Kid's sprawling body.

The hours passed slowly. At last, toward dawn, a single shot broke the silence. The lieutenant, himself in agony, ordered his men to wait for daylight.

And, when it came, with caution and an understandable fear the soldiers entered the patio.

Butch Cassidy had gone home to Utah, Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Texas, New Mexico—it is also quite possible that he had gone somewhere else.

Cassidy, using the final bullet, was dead by his own hand. •



WE WERE CAUGHT IN AN ICE TRAP

Continued from page 13

to build a shelter, but we couldn't stay motionless for more than a few minutes, so we gave up the project and began running around again to keep warm. I was hungry so I took out my chocolate and divided it with Sheeniktook.

It had grown very dark and we couldn't see more than a few feet around us. Only a faint band of light hung close to the horizon. It must have been reflected light of the moon or the northern lights—its metallic glare flashed back and forth, strong one moment, weak the next. The whole strip of light seemed to dance in the air.

Suddenly, a tearing sound, like ripping paper, shook our float. Instinctively I flattened myself. We felt the ice heave under us, then a big chunk must have broken off because our small ice island tilted sharply, seemed to poise that way for a long moment, then fell horizontal again. Ten minutes later we heard more cracking nearby and wondered whether our ice was slowly breaking to pieces. Another sound made me hold my breath. A walrus barked loudly in the distance; the noise bounced around, then died away.

Where were my dreams of that afternoon? I was miserable now, close to freezing—one step from death. I began wondering if I would have to amputate my leg in the morning. How could I do it? I tried to go through the motions in my mind. Leg amputation, let's see... I'd have to use my hunting knife. ... But thoughts of freezing to death in the icy water crowded into my mind. If worse came to worse, I could always use my gun. Stop thinking this way, Moody, I told myself. Run around, keep warm.

Foolishly, I took out my compass, but it was a way to pass a minute or two. The only thing it told me was that north was north. And even that wasn't too certain.

What good was a compass when you were only 400 miles from the magnetic pole? I looked at Sheeniktook. He was suffering from the cold even more than I was. With his thin clothing, he must have been. I offered him my sweater, but he refused. I wondered about Tuga. He could have given his friend something to cover himself with. But Tuga was snoring, occasionally he hiccupped in his sleep.

After another 30 minutes of silence I thought I'd go mad. "Sheeniktook," I blurted out, "what will happen?"

"Don't know, tide will change soon." He crawled over and looked at my compass. He had never done that before, had no respect for those *kabloona* instruments. "Maybe tide brings us back, maybe not. We can eat dogs." Yes, we had the dogs, but how would we keep warm?

"Listen," he said. He knelt on the ice and held his ear close to the surface. "You can hear when tide changes." I listened too but heard nothing that had meaning to me. Sloshing water, soft creaking in the ice. Sheeniktook got up again. "No change," and he started running and swinging his arms.

We went through another hour of torture. My leg was still numb from the cold. But it wasn't frozen yet. I rubbed it and it ached. Sheeniktook muttered to himself and urged me to run around more.

It must have been about 4 a.m., still completely dark, when Sheeniktook got down on his knees again and stayed in that position for several minutes. Then he got up. "Tide changes," he said. It was true, for with the first gray light I could see that our float was definitely moving in the opposite direction. Possibly we were going back toward shore. There was a soft thump; we had hit another ice pan. Sheeniktook awakened

Tuga immediately. They held a long consultation. "Tuga go see other ice," Sheeniktook said with hope in his voice. But I had forgotten about hope.

As the sun climbed above the horizon, I noticed faint wind streaks high above us. If there was a storm up in the skies and that storm came down, we would be pushed out to sea again.

Tuga came back and held another long conference with Sheeniktook. "Much ice around," he said. "We must try to get off."

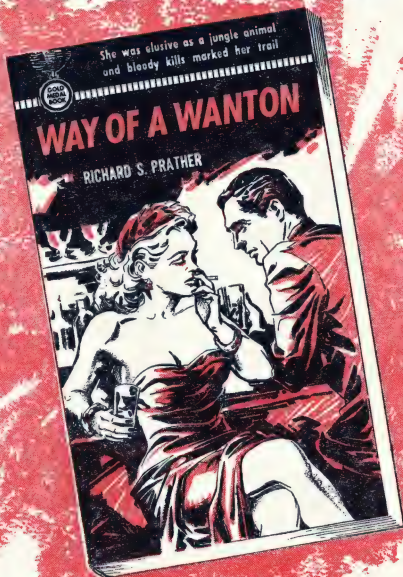
We walked along the rim of our pan, first in one direction, then back. There were many ice floats around us, big ones. A collision shook our block. Another large pan had hit us on the shore side. We hurried over. Sheeniktook looked at my compass again and then we crossed onto the other slab of ice. We were on our way. Cautiously we picked our way from one pan to another. Sometimes we had to wait until leads closed up. A few times we went back because a wide channel blocked our progress. Once, the ice we were standing on was pushed under by a bigger pan that moved up over it. We had to jump for it.

The air was full of creaking, crashing sounds. Finally, after two hours, we hit solid ice. Relieved, we walked on at a slower pace. Tuga climbed a ridge and scanned the horizon. He pointed over to the left. "*Komatik*," he said. It took another hour before we reached it.

Sheeniktook and I wrapped ourselves in warm clothing, we ate a little, then decided we'd better get a move on. Even the solid ice we were on wasn't safe any longer. The sun rose in a purple sky and lent its color to the scene. There were big cracks everywhere. Once, I looked back and saw that the tracks of our *komatik* had moved apart six feet. We hurried on, it became a desperate flight.

When we reached the shore, we breathed freely again. I took the telescope out of the sled and looked out over the sea. The ice was breaking up everywhere, huge chunks of it tilted up at crazy angles. Much of the field had not moved in at all. Big pans were drifting far out in the open water. That last look was enough. In fact, I think the image of that ice field will always be with me. •

BEST-SELLING NOVEL IN THIS ISSUE



WAY OF A WANTON

CHAPTER ONE

I was as confused as a sterile rabbit, primarily because I couldn't make up my mind where to look. The little blonde that everybody here at the party called Dot was doing an impromptu cancan, and even if she wasn't dressed for that kind of dance, she sure had the equipment for it. At the same time, over in the far corner of the living room was a long-limbed lovely built like something designed by a sex fiend.

I didn't know whether to look at the dance or the design, but I didn't want to miss anything, so I alternated. My eyes were

BY RICHARD S. PRATHER

having such a difficult time of it that a couple of times there I thought they were going to collide. Finally, though, Dot finished the dance and plopped down on a couch. She was a little thing, no more than five feet tall, well-rounded, and with pure white skin as far as I could see.

I had a swallow of my water highball, hoping it would ease the dryness in my throat. It didn't. I shifted my gaze, waited about a minute, then got up and walked across the living room toward the long-limbed lovely.

She was wearing a strapless white dress and leaning against the wall, looking out the huge window, and smooth silver-blond hair hung down against her shoulders and curled under in a long page boy. My own short-cropped hair is almost white, like my screwy eyebrows, and this was one of the few women I'd ever seen with hair lighter in color than mine. Except old women. This was no old woman. She was several years under my thirty.

The radio was still making a lot of noise and she didn't hear me come up. I stopped in front of her and said pleasantly, "Hello, I'm Shell Scott."

She turned her head slowly and looked at me from deep, dark brown eyes with lashes she used like whips. Her skin had been burned brown by countless suns, and the long hair that might once have been golden blonde was startling against the nut brown of her face and shoulders. While, even teeth flashed behind ripe red lips that curved in a smile as she said softly, "Hello, you. I'm Helen."

This was one hell of a party. I wouldn't say it was a typical Hollywood party, but it is safe to say it was a typical wild, wanton, hell-raising Hollywood party. And so far it was much like such parties anywhere. As a private detective—the entire staff of Sheldon Scott, Investigations—the man who's the outsider here in Raul Evans' home in the Hollywood hills. The other nine people were all part of Louis Genova Productions, an independent film-producing company currently engaged in shooting an opus called "Jungle Girl." Present were Louis Genova, the producer, and the director, the writer, and the male and female stars. Also present were four of the extra gals who were to run screaming through jungles and burn at stakes. Any minute now I figured they were going to start screaming and running, even though this was late Sunday afternoon and shooting on the picture didn't start again until tomorrow. I didn't especially enjoy any of the men here—except Raul Evans, the host—but I hadn't come to enjoy men.

Helen was looking pleasantly up at me. "Helen what?" I asked her.

"Marshall."

"Oh, then you're the Helen. The Jungle Girl herself, huh?"

"That's right. I haven't seen you before, have I?"

"I just got here about ten minutes back. Still on my first drink. Nice party."

"Mmm. Nice."

And so was she. Tall and willowy, and smiling at me now, she was a delicious woman. I told her so and added, "While you search for any hidden meaning in that, may I fix you another drink?"

"Scotch and soda. And please."

We were in the spacious living room of Raul's hilltop home on Durand Drive behind Hollywood, and we could look through the one entire wall of glass and see the road winding away from us, getting smaller and narrower as it reached nearer to the town far below. The swimming pool was visible fifty feet from the house, and green grass surrounded the pool and extended for a hundred feet down the hillside. Here inside the room the buzz of conversation mixed with the sound of ice tinkling in glasses when the music blaring from the radio didn't drown out everything else. People sprawled on plush divans or sat in heavy overstuffed chairs, everybody seemed to have a drink. I walked across the room to a three-story bar against the far wall and made Helen's high-ball plus another bourbon and water for me.

While I mixed them I looked at the rest of the people in the room. I hadn't known quite what to expect when Raul had phoned me, but it had sounded interesting. I've

known Raul for over six years, just about the length of time I've had an agency in downtown L.A., and he's one of the few guys I know in the movie-making industry that I really get along well with. Lately he'd been throwing so many eyebrow-raising parties that it was even mentioned in some of the nosy columns. But, unlike the columnists, I figured it was his business.

So, even though I wasn't part of the film-fam crowd, here I was. When I'd first come in Raul had handed me a glass and introduced me around in that en-masse fashion common to many of these affairs, but I could remember most of the names he'd rattled off.

Raul was Genova's director on "Jungle Girl," and he and Genova himself, a dark, worried-looking man about five feet nine inches tall, were poring over some papers on top of a grand piano while fashion plate Oscar Swallow, who had written the original of "Jungle Girl" for Genova, peered over their shoulders. Swallow was a bachelor like me and he obviously considered himself eligible.

The only other man present, Douglas King, was also the only sensible one present, it seemed to me. He was the male star of "Jungle Girl"—and very male he was, too. He had on swimming trunks, though nobody had yet been in the pool, and he was built like a couple of Greek gods mashed together.

In the movie, I understood, he was Brutus, the guy who swings through trees and rescues everybody from the apes and things. I say he was sensible because little Dot was on his lap and whispering in his ear.

The three other girls were giggling together as I finished mixing the drinks.

One of them, a redhead, was saying, "... a real big shot—he's got two pools. He's casting the chorus for it like Ziegfeld used to—you know, put a quarter between their thighs, knees, and calves. Have to hold all three—"

"Sylvia couldn't make it using rolls of quarters. Hell, she won't have to. It isn't by holding quarters between her—"

"That Sylvia? She lifts her lips and she's acting. If I—"

"That's not what she lifts, darling—"

I grinned happily and walked back to Helen carrying the two drinks. I gave her the Scotch and said, "I missed you when I came in. Usually I'm wider awake."

"You can make amends now." She peered up at me. "You must be the biggest man here. How big?"

"Six-two. A shade less. And about two-oh-five. O.K.?"

"Very." She reached up casually and with one red-tipped finger traced a line down the bridge of my slightly bent nose. "What happens?"

"Busted. In the Marines. Not the police action; the one before that. One of the big wars to make the world safe for the dead."

She was looking at my left ear, the ear from which a small slice is missing, so I said, "Bullet—in a private war." This seemed like the kind of party where a man could press his luck, so I added, "As long as we're on vital statistics..." and shifted my gaze.

She smiled and said softly, "Thirty-five. A shade more."

I shifted again.

"Twenty-three."

I shifted again.

She didn't say anything. I waited a moment, then looked back at her face. She was laughing silently. I said, "No statistics?"

"Where were you looking?"

"Why—oh, ha. Well, your nose. Well—"

She interrupted my logical explanation with "Thirty-five, too. That all right?"

I grinned back at her. "It will do."

Somebody clapped me on the shoulder just in time to keep me from getting completely lost in this conversation. I turned around. I

It was Raul. "Hello again, Shell," he said. "Glad you came?" I nodded and he added, "I see you've picked off our star."

"Uh-huh." The movie's bound to make money.

"Thank you, sir," said Helen.

I looked over toward the piano, where Genova and Swallow stood stolid, Swallow towering over the much shorter producer. They were quite a contrast in other ways, too. Swallow was a Hollywood writer who apparently tried to look and act like a Hollywood writer, and he was a big gob of color next to Genova, who was wearing a plain dark single-breasted suit. Swallow was slow talking, slow-moving; Genova was a little forty-year-old dynamo of rapid-fire chatter and quick, darting movements who impressed me as a man who would walk down escalators. Right now he was waving a sheet of paper in his left hand and nervously snapping the fingers of his right hand, using up some of the excess energy. The most obvious and notable part of his features was the pair of huge black eyebrows that traveled up and down his forehead as he talked. I'd heard that Genova had one god: money.

I nodded toward the two men at the piano and asked Raul, "Business?"

"Yeah. It came up after the party started. Actually Genova doesn't quite fit in with the—uh, somewhat abundant atmosphere here. He phoned about some last-minute changes for tomorrow's shooting and I almost had to ask him over." He grinned. "Damned if I was going to leave."

Raul's grin lit up his entire, rather homely, face. Invariably it made me feel like grinning back. He was almost as tall as I, but thin, and with a thick, neatly trimmed mustache riding on his long upper lip. Raul and I didn't sit around propping each other on the back and saying how much we liked each other. The affection was there, though, and it was mutual.

Helen said, "More changes on 'Girl, Raul?"

"Afraid so." He turned to me. "We're already running over the budget on the damned thing. I wish L. G. would settle these things doing working hours, though." He grinned again and shrugged his thin shoulders. "Cheaper for him this way. The hell with it. Let's have a drink. Let's have a double."

He wandered off. I looked around the room for a few moments, a screwy idea I'd had earlier entering my mind again. I turned to Helen. "You notice anything peculiar?"

"Peculiar?"

"Funny. Off balance or something?"

"About Raul?"

"Not just Raul. The whole party."

Ever since right after I'd come in I'd had the feeling that something was off key. And the feeling had persisted despite the kicks and laughter and obvious enjoyment of some of the people present, including me. It seemed that, even for a party like this one, the guests were trying too hard, laughing too loudly, clapping back too boisterously. There seemed to be a kind of tension in the air, as if everybody was under pressure.

Helen said slowly, "I don't know. Maybe. How do you mean?"

"Well... it's a fine party, but it's like—"

I searched for the word—like a wack. You know. Everybody's got to get plastered to have fun. Or like people pretending."

She swallowed part of her drink. "I think you're reaching for that one," she said. "But this is a funny collection of people, isn't it? Several varieties of worries here. Take your friend Raul. You know his wife's at Tahoe?"

I knew that. Raul had chased around a little too long and brazenly, and his wife, Evelyn, had finally headed for Lake Tahoe and the Cal-Neva Lodge four or five weeks

There was nothing strange about finding a beautiful body in the director's swimming pool—but this one happened to be very dead.

And it was up to me, Shell Scott, to find her murderer even if I had to tear Hollywood apart to do it.

back. Tahoe has pretty much replaced Las Vegas and Reno for many of the Hollywood couples who want to end it quickly. I knew Raul well enough to know he wasn't happy about it, but since Evelyn had left he'd done nothing except chase even harder, and per- versely party longer and later.

Helen added, "Genova's got money troubles. King's wife is suing for custody of their two kids. And even Swallow has trou- bles." She hesitated and added, "Maybe."

I said, "How about you? Any troubles I can fix?"

"Yes," she said definitely. "I was having a fine time until you got so somber. Do you realize you spoiled a conversation?"

I grinned at her. "I'm sorry, Helen. I'll begin all over. How do you do, miss? I'm thinking of starting a nudist colony. All I need is nudists. Any suggestions?"

"That's better," she said. "Sign me up. Where's this to be?"

"Organizational meetings will be held in the Spartan Apartment Hotel in Hollywood. That's right across from the Wilshire Country Club, which should be ideal."

"If a bit public," she said. "Spartan. That must be about where you live."

"It is. I elect you queen of the Shell Scott Nudist Colony."

She smiled. "And the king?" She whipped her eyelashes at me again, then said, "Don't tell me. But I imagine King Kong over there will want in."

"Douglas? He's excluded; I accept applica- tions only from humans." I glanced toward him and was surprised to find him glaring at me. "What's eating him?"

She looked at Douglas King and waved to him, saying softly, "He likes me. We've been out on the Strip a couple of times. Very dis- creet because of the court battle with his wife, naturally. Nothing serious with us, al- though he tried. My, how he tried. Maybe he's afraid you're beating his time."

"Should he be?"

She smiled, but didn't answer.

I took Helen's arm and pulled her closer to me. "Listen, little sweetie," I said, "I hope you're not one of those bloodthirsty wenches who like men to make like gladiators."

She tossed her silver-blond hair. "I'm not," she said, "definitely not." She reached up and started playing with my right ear.

"Why? Does he scare you?"

I looked back at King. "Only a little."

I'd seen the guy around town a few times without meeting him, and I'd seen one movie he'd been in, which movie showed him stab- bing crocodiles and hanging from trees by his tail or some such thing. He was a damned good-looking man if you like them beetle- browsed and surly, and he was conceited as hell. He was an even six feet and had lumps all over him and the lumps were muscles. If you didn't like it, he'd lump you.

Helen finally let go of my ear. "You don't look like a man who scares easily," she said.

I grinned at her. "Have it your way. If he even sneers at me, I'll snatch all the hairs out of his chest."

She gurgled her appreciation of my daring while I finished my drink. I said, "I'm be- hind on the liquor. How long's this ball been going on?"

"Since about two. You're not far behind."

"I'll catch up, but isn't this a little un- usual? Big drinking party before the movie's finished?"

"Uh-huh. But that's why we started early —so we can go home early and be fresh to- morrow. It isn't like working for MGM or Twentieth, say; we're more informal. For that matter, almost all of us here now were here last Thursday night, too, but that was mostly business then."

That seemed to remind her of something, because she frowned slightly, narrow brows slanting. "You know," she said, "I wish you hadn't mentioned that off-balance business. The wake. You started me thinking. I guess people aren't ever completely at ease after the police talk to them."

"What police? Who'd they talk to?"

She looked slowly around the room. "Oh, just about all of us, I guess."

"When did all this happen?"

"Yesterday. I still don't know what it's all about, though. Zoe hasn't shown up or some- thing. Cops wondered if we knew anything about where she might be."

"Zoe?"

She wiggled a finger toward Swallow, re- splendent in a mustard-colored jacket and chocolate slacks, with a beige scarf around his neck. "His secretary."

Now I frowned. "What is this?" I asked her. "Some kind of mystery?"

"I don't think so. All I know is she hasn't shown up at the studio. Wasn't there Friday or Saturday, anyway?"

I was going to ask her some more about this Zoe, but suddenly she changed the sub- ject, and the direction the conversation seemed to be taking kept my mind occupied with other things for a while.

"I'm sorry," she said. "There we go again. Oh, did you bring a suit?"

"Swim suit? Yeah. It's in the car."

She smiled in what I thought was a slightly mysterious and highly sensual fashion and said, "It's just as well, even though you prob- ably won't need it."

"Oh? Nobody going swimming?"

"Everybody will, I imagine."

Just as I was about to ask if we were all to jump into the pool with our clothes on and drown, Raul gulped the last of another drink and shouted over the noise, "We're going swimming, people! Everybody get un- dressed. The prudies can wear suits."

Helen's smile broadened slightly, and I thought I had at least part of my answer. I cleared my throat. "Well," I said, "I never." That was me. Brilliant as always.

CHAPTER TWO

Oscar Swallow swung around toward Raul. "Oh, you cur," he cried, "not yet."

"Excuse me a minute, Helen," I said. "Think I'll chat with this man Raul." I paused. "You have a suit?"

She nodded.

I looked at the deeply tanned skin of her face and arms. "You get a lot of sun, don't you?"

"All the time. But I'm not tanned all over. I have two white strips." Her dark eyes were merry. "Little narrow white strips."

"Oh?" I cleared my throat. "That's inter- esting. I—uh, excuse me."

She chuckled as I walked across the room. When I reached Raul, he said, "Get your trunks, Shell, while you've got the chance."

"O.K. What's with Swallow? Can't he swim?"

Raul laughed. He was a little tight. "Sure he swims. But he made a phone call a while back to his secretary. He has designs on the woman; wants to get her into the pool. Only she doesn't know it yet." He laughed again. "He knows if we're all splashing around when she gets here, she'll probably never join the party." He sobered a little and shook his head. "Can't say I blame the man. She's some woman. Some woman."

There were a couple of things he'd said that had confused me a bit, but one above all. I said, "He called his secretary? You mean Zoe?"

"Where did you hear about Zoe?"

"Why? Any reason I shouldn't?"

"No, no reason," he replied. "Just surprised me. She's taken a powder somewhere. I guess. I meant Sherry, Swallow's new stenog. He dictates most of his stuff."

Swallow and Genova had been talking together and now they walked over to us. As they came up Genova was saying angrily, "That damn Bondhelm! I'd like to cut him to pieces a pound of fat at a time."

Raul chuckled. "That'd take about a year, considering his size." Swallow grumbled. "The sonofabitch must of studied under Shlyuck."

"Direct descendant," agreed Swallow. He looked around and added, in one of those imitation British accents that never fool anyone except those who want to be fooled, "Things seem to have calmed a trifle."

I said, "Guess the cancan dancer ran down." Then I asked Raul, "She in the movie?"

"Yeah, that's Dot English. But she gets eaten by a lion in one of the first scenes."

Swallow broke in. "Very intelligent lion. Almost human, don't you think, old boy?"

I looked at him to see if he were old-boy-ing me, but he was addressing himself to Raul. Swallow glanced over at Dot and said, "Lovely, lovely—and that creamy white skin. I think I'd call her Snow White with sex appeal."

It about summed up my own impression of Dot, and it was a fair description, but I'd read the line before in one of the movie columns. Raul chuckled and said, "I think that lion was you in a lion skin, Swallow."

Swallow grinned but didn't answer as he and Genova walked to the bar.

I asked Raul, "Something else. What's this about cops asking questions?"

"Well," he said, "you do get around." He grinned. "Always the detective, aren't you? Believe me, I didn't ask you here to quiz the guests. Shell, Cops got a bug they should look for Zoe. Talked to me yesterday; to Genova, King, all of us, I guess." He shrugged. "Me? I know from nothing. Why they should even ask us, I don't know. Except she's been working at the studio." He paused and said, "For God's sake, relax, man. This is supposed to be for kids."

"O.K., Raul. Uh, say, you heard anything from Evelyn?"

His face sobered. "No. Looks like she's... gone." He frowned and looked at me. "I wish— Oh, to hell with it. Skip it, Shell."

I nodded, handed him my empty glass, and walked out the front door and down the steps to the flagstone walk leading out to the drive. I grabbed my trunks from the front seat of my Cadillac and stopped.

A new Ford coupe pulled up behind my Cad and a girl in a bright print dress got out and started walking across the lawn toward the path. I guessed this was the Sherry Raul had mentioned. She was about twenty feet away, walking toward me, and at first

I just glanced at her curiously. She was walking rapidly and my initial impression was that she was cute and curvy and a highly jiggly tomato.

"Hello," I said.

She looked at me for the first time and said cheerily, "Hi, there. How're you?" She walked right by me and up the path, and I really didn't pay as much attention to her face as I should have. How I missed noticing, even on that first casual glance, I don't know, but even in a town that boasts such prominent women as Jane Russell, Denise Darcel, and Maie Wilson, this little cutie was right up there.

She went past me and started up the path and I watched her revolve away, then followed about ten feet behind her. I'd been having fun inside the house watching Dot and talking to Helen, but nice as that had been, I felt right now as if I'd gone from the famine to the feast. She heard my footsteps on the path, looked over her shoulder, and smiled, then kept on going. She seemed like a happy little gal.

I followed her inside, then went over behind the bar for a drink while I sized up the situation. Swallow swung around as soon as the girl came in and said exuberantly, "Ah, Sherry, my dear. So glad you could come."

He had a habit I'd noticed of acting as if he were the host, but what annoyed me most about him—so far, at least—was that phony British accent he'd stolen. Like a lot of affected fakes, he rolled "ripping" trippingly off his tongue, along with "old boy," "by Jove!" and even "bloody" in perfect pear-shaped tones. He had already changed into trunks that might have been tailor-made.

Sherry said something to him and he threw back his head and laughed. I'd have bet he did that a lot; it made his neck look big and strong and the muscles rippled in his throat. He even laughed pear-shaped. Raul and Douglas King both headed toward him and the late arrival, but I lost track of the action right then because Helen sat down on one of the stools at the bar.

She smiled. "Do you remember my drink, Mr. Scott?"

"Shell, honey. And it's Scotch and soda." Helen said without sarcasm, "She's lovely, isn't she?"

"What? The new one? Well, yes. More cute than anything else."

"She sort of sparkles. Know who she is?"

"Swallow's temporary secretary, isn't she?"

She nodded. "She ought to be in the picture."

I grinned at her. "She wouldn't get past the Johnston office. For that matter, I don't know how you will. Breen will turn green."

"You're sweet," she said.

Laughter bubbled from the little gathering a few feet beyond us, then Douglas King detached himself from the others and walked up to the bar. He sat down and brushed Helen's thigh, looking at me.

"Mix me a drink," he said.

I didn't like the flat way he said it, as if it were an order, but I let it pass. "What are you drinking?"

"Scotch," he said on the rocks. You're the private eye, huh?"

"That's right. Only we're seldom called private eyes." I mixed the drink and put it in front of him. He grunted. Just for the hell of it, I grunted.

Helen said, "I think I'll slip into my suit."

She gave me a big smile when she said it. King grunted. Maybe he had a pain.

Helen walked off and left me and Bruta together. I finished my drink and picked up my trunks. Some of the others had changed into swim suits and I wanted to be around for whatever the hell was supposed to happen out there at the pool. I stepped from behind the bar as King tossed off his drink

and plunked the glass down on the bar top.

"Mix me another," he said.

I grinned at him. "Sorry," I said pleasantly.

"There's a new bartender on now."

He looked squarely at me and said softly,

"Mix me another one, anyway."

He was still sitting on the stool, all nine hundred pounds of him swung around a little toward me, and we were looking straight at each other. Obviously he was pushing this beyond the point of light chatter, and there were several things I could have done. I could have stared at him for several minutes to see which of us would look away first—which seemed pretty stupid—or I could get nasty, or I could clobber him one. I was getting damned unhappy with this boy, but I'm not a guy who goes around looking for trouble. In my business I get enough without looking for it.

So I said, "Let's not be silly, King," and walked away. He didn't spring on my back and bite me, so I went over toward the piano, where Swallow and Raul were talking to the outstanding woman in the room. Behind them Genova was rapidly shoving papers into his brief case. The girl had her back in the curve of the piano top, her elbows resting on the polished black surface behind her, and I added an inch to my unofficial estimate. She glanced at me as I came up, then in apparent answer to something Raul had said she laughed merrily and replied, "All right, Raul. I won't be angry."

I cleared my throat.

Swallow said, "Well, as long as you're here, how about a drink?"

"All right. Only one, though. I still think it's a dirty trick."

I cleared my throat very loudly.

Swallow said, "I shall make it myself," and headed for the bar. Big of him.

I dug Raul in the ribs. When he turned toward me I said, "Hello, pal. What's new?"

He grinned. "I've been expecting you," he said. Then he turned to the girl and said, "Sherry, this is one of my old, old friends. He's a private investigator named Shell Scott, and not as tough as he looks. Shell, this is Sherry."

"Hello, Mr. Scott," she said, and her voice was as soft as a whispered "Kiss me." She added, "I remember you. You're the man who was following me."

"For years," I said. "And call me Shell." I might have said any number of other things, but this was the first good chance I'd had to take a look at her face: I took it, and it kept me fully occupied for a while. She was only about five-foot or so, and she was looking up at me from big eyes that were the clear blue of sky after rain. Her lips were full, soft, and red as the edge of a rainbow, and turned up mischievously at the corners now in the start of a smile. Silky hair, the rich color of dark mahogany, tumbled down to her shoulders. Right here, I decided, was a woman who could have all of my time she wanted.

Finally I found my tongue again. "We sort of go together: Shell and Sherry. Names do, anyway. You joining the party?"

She smiled. "I thought there was some work for me to do here—typing or note-taking or something. That gay deceiver over there—she glanced at Oscar Swallow across the room mixing drinks—led me to believe there was. But as long as there isn't, I'll just have my drink and run."

Raul spoke up. "I move that Sherry remains."

"Second the motion," I agreed.

She laughed musically. "Gentlemen, you're overruled." She turned and took her drink from Swallow as he came up, then asked me, "A detective? Are you here picking up clues or whatever detectives do?"

"Uh-h. Just enjoying myself." I looked

around the room. Almost everybody else was in a swim suit now, and that made me consider how lovely Sherry would look at the beach. Particularly a private beach. She was sipping at her drink and listening to Raul, so I excused myself and hunted up an empty room. I changed into my trunks and when I came back into the living room I noticed everybody was now ready for a swim except Genova—who wasn't really invited, Raul had told me.

But there was one thing missing: the bosomy Sherry. I spotted Raul, long and thin in a pair of faded green trunks, and walked up beside him.

"What happened to the little—"

He knew what I'd started to say. "She left. I figured she would when she found out Swallow didn't really have anything important cooking but just wanted to make a pass at her." He smiled. "But I wish she'd stayed—even with Swallow."

I'd been wishing the same thing, myself. Then Raul turned away from me and yelled, "Outside, everybody. Hit the pool."

We all trooped out, blonde little Dot prancing in the lead, looking very fetching in a bright yellow two-piece Bikini. Everybody seemed to be happy, yelling and laughing, and I decided I'd only been imagining that something was dampening the spirits around here. The pool itself was a beauty. It was about sixty feet long, and at one end there was a diving board and at the other end was the feature of Raul's pool that made it different from most of its Hollywood counterparts. That was the waterfall. It wasn't a very big waterfall, but water was pumped continually up from the pool to splash down over artistically piled rocks and back into the pool again. It was pretty, and had a pleasant sound to it, and if you tried hard you could almost imagine it was a country stream. The house and grounds were isolated enough. Even the other homes nearby were out of sight.

We grouped around the pool and I spotted Helen and walked up beside her. She looked even better in her light blue one-piece suit than she had in the strapless white dress.

"I was looking for you," she said. She went on casually, "How do you like my new suit? Usually I wear a two-piece, but I liked this one. Do you think anybody will really go swimming in the nude?"

I swallowed. The sun was low now, but it was still plenty bright. Very damned bright, if you asked me. I said, "In the—Is that on the program?"

She shrugged. "All I know is what Raul told everybody when he got the party together," she said, smiling broadly. "That we could bring men, but we couldn't wear them in the water. You know. Hang your clothes on a hickory limb. . ."

She put her hand on my arm. "Scare you?" My heartbeat had speeded up a little bit. I looked down at Helen's brown eyes and red lips. The way she was smiling now, her lips seemed to thin and look almost savage. Their red seemed like the stain of blood and her dark eyes had narrowed and appeared almost black.

I said, "No, I don't think so."

She squeezed my arm gently just as Raul shouted loudly, "No suits in the pool! Who's brave enough to be first in?"

Raul was only a few feet from me and I called to him, "Hey, you serious?"

He swung around a little unsteadily and shouted, "Hell, why else have the pool?"

There was quiet for about three seconds, and it appeared we were all going to stand there looking foolish, and then Dot, dear delightful little Dot, squealed bravely, "I'm brave," and ran toward the diving board ten yards away.

Well, now I knew.

CAVALIER



"Miss, would you kindly remove your hat?"

CHAPTER THREE

Dot ran to the end of the pool and climbed up on the springboard. The quiet of a moment before was gone now and somebody yelled, "Attagirl, Dottie," as she reached behind her and fumbled with her bra.

I heard Swallow's British accent close by as he said happily, "Ah, this is a lovely Hollywood innovation: The Casting Pool."

Dot unfastened the bra and pulled the cloth from her body, then held it high over her head for a moment, posing before us all.

I was watching Sherry had stuck around. Then Helen stepped closer to me, her arm sliding around my waist, her soft thigh pressed against mine. I put my arm around her bare shoulders and pulled her closer to me, my throat tight. Dot threw the bra away from her and it was a spot of yellow on the surface of the water for a moment before it sank slowly downward. Then she put her hands on the brief trunk, slowly slid them down and kicked them into the pool.

That really broke the ice, if it hadn't been broken before. One of the other girls whose name I couldn't remember, a sweet-faced redhead, started to peel off her suit, and Raul went over to help her. Dot still stood on the springboard, and now she started bouncing up and down, squealing. Talk about bouncing! You never saw such bouncing.

Dot yelled, "Come on in, everybody," and dove into the pool. I was surprised: No steam came up. Right then Helen said, "Well?"

I turned and faced her. She was smiling easily, and as I looked at her she unfastened the single strap that was looped around her neck and helped hold up the top of her suit. With her fingers hooked in the cloth over her full breasts she said, "Going to join me?"

I said, "You know something? I feel a little silly. Probably I should have had one more drink. Two more. Several."

She chuckled throatily. "Oh, you're like a little boy."

"The hell I'm like a little boy."

She laughed; then, looking at my face, with her red lips smiling and her teeth pressed together, she pulled the suit down slowly and smoothly, without hesitation, baring snowy white breasts that jutted from the

darkly tanned skin above and beneath them. With the suit down, her body naked to the waist, she paused.

"Shell," she said. "don't make me do this all by myself."

I was stalling for time now. "Don't mind if I'm a little slow, Helen."

"It's all right. I like to do everything slowly, myself."

"Everything?"

"That's what I said."

"Is that good?"

"Oh," she said softly, "it's so good."

She stood looking at me, her hands still holding the blue cloth bunched low at her waist. I could see the beginning of white skin at her hips where the sun hadn't touched her flesh. She stepped close to me and said again, "Well?"

I couldn't stall any longer, and now I didn't want to. Helen and I were going for a swim. I put my hands on the top of my trunks, hesitated, and somebody screamed.

I thought, What the hell? Isn't this the idea? And then I heard the scream again. Louder this time, piercing and shrill and with the taut thread of horror in it.

I looked to my left and saw Dot climbing frantically from the pool, stumbling, then getting up and running toward me, her mouth open, still screaming.

She started to run past me, but I grabbed her arm. "What the hell's the matter?" I yelled at her. "What's wrong with you?"

"There's someone dead in there. Someone dead!"

All the babble had died down, the shouts and squeals and laughter stopped, and people started gathering around us. I said, "Take it easy, Dot. You must have made a mistake."

She was over her first panic, but her eyes were still staring and her lips twisted as she said raggedly, "No. It's true."

Nobody said a word for several seconds, and suddenly it seemed a little chillier. The sun was lower now, getting ready to dip behind distant trees that cut jagged chunks out of its base. There wasn't any sound except the gurgling of the imitation waterfall. There was tenseness now, all right, and maybe fear. Just like that, in a few seconds, everything had changed.

I said, "What happened? Why do you

think there's something . . . dead. Where?"

She let out a long shuddering breath. "In the pool. I was going to swim underwater and come out from the waterfall. I thought it would be fun. And I put my hand on it — on a face."

She turned and pointed at the spot where swirling water dropped into the pool. All of us looked where she pointed, but we couldn't see beneath the rippled and foaming surface of the water. I looked around me. Everybody who had been inside when I arrived was out here now. Genova was the only one fully dressed. Some of the others had swim suits on, some nothing at all. There wasn't anything exciting about the nakedness any more. At least for now, the party was a bust.

Swallow spoke to Dot. "Couldn't it have been a rock? Or something else there?"

She didn't answer, just shook her head. "Listen, Dot," I said. "You weren't the only one in the water. What probably happened was that you touched somebody else swimming underwater." I tried to grin at her. "Probably some guy made a pass at you."

Nobody even smiled. It was going to take more than feeble remarks to save this party. I glanced around again. Of all the people besides Dot, the only two who were wet were Raul and his redhead. I asked them, "Were either of you down at that end?"

They both shook their heads. Raul said, "We were under the springboard. And . . . there wasn't anyone else in the water yet."

Louis Genova had been standing on the outskirts of the crowd, a brief case in his hand as if he'd been about to leave. The bastard, I thought, he's not sticking around or joining the party, but he'll stay long enough to get a peek. Now he spoke. "Somebody will have to see if anything is there."

I think that had become apparent to almost all of us, but nobody wanted to speak up. The idea of a dead thing down there under the water wasn't pleasant.

Genova went on, "Well, which of you men wants to settle this? I can't very well leave till it is settled." Genova, the boss.

Nobody spoke for a few moments, then I said, "O.K. I'll take a look."

My words were almost like a signal. Helen looped the single strap around her neck and refastened it in silence. The girl with Raul picked up a black swim suit and turned her back, modest now. Dot looked around her as if she were still dazed; her yellow Bikini was at the bottom of the pool. She turned and walked toward the house. I looked up at the sun again; it was half hidden behind the trees and a definite chill was in the air.

CHAPTER FOUR

The water was cold. It felt it close around my body and I opened my eyes as I swam along the bottom toward the cement wall at the pool's edge. Above me the water from the falls made the surface swirl, and the murky illumination that filtered through the ripples and bubbles of foam sent fragile shadow patterns gliding below me like scurrying mice. I swam forward through the treading shadows until I saw a heavier, more solid shadow that didn't move.

I swept my hands through the water hard, then moved them slowly to keep myself at the bottom as I drifted close to the darker shadow. Then my face was a foot away from it and I could see the long cobwebby threads of hair waving idly in the slow currents, and the paler blots of the face beneath it; a woman's face with distended, bulging eyes.

I could feel a shiver of revulsion twist through my body, but for a moment more I looked at her. The almost frightening thought sprang into my mind that maybe she was alive, but then I knew it couldn't be

true. Her body was fully clothed and twisted strangely. I could see that a heavy weight held her down below the surface, and that something had cut a mark deeply into her throat. The thought that she might be alive persisted insanely in my mind, and I reached forward with one hand. I touched her neck, felt the heavy wire that was twisted around it and pierced in the flesh, then turned away and kicked to the surface.

The others were standing at the edge of the pool. They moved back as I swam toward them and climbed out dripping. Nobody asked what I'd found; my expression must have made it obvious. They waited.

I gulped air into my lungs and then said, "There's a dead woman down there. It looks like she was murdered."

The silence lasted an uncomfortably long time. Finally Oscar Swallow, perhaps inspired by a desire to hear somebody say something in a shaky voice, "That's the trouble with Hollywood; somebody's always crashing the parties."

Nobody appreciated his remark, but at least it started the others off. Raul groaned, "Oh, God, my God. Murdered!"

I looked around at all the faces. "Well," I said, "anyone know anything about this?" Nobody spoke. Half of them looked away from me, slowly shaking their heads. "Raul," I said, "this is your home. You know anything about it?"

"God, no. What a horrible . . . No, Shell. I don't understand. I don't get it."

After a few moments I said to Raul, "I guess I'll have to use your phone."

He looked at me as if he were startled. "Phone? What for?"

"Somebody has to call the police."

"Oh, Well . . ." He let it trickle off. Suddenly Douglas King said belligerently, "Call the police, hell! I don't want to get mixed up in this. No sense in any of us getting mixed up in it."

I was still standing with my back to the pool and the others stood in a little group facing me. I looked at King. "You're no more mixed up in this than anyone else, but we're all involved a little just because we were all here when the body was found."

Genova scratched one of his bushy eyebrows and stepped closer to me. "Let's not be hasty about this, Mr. Scott. I can see King's point. Douglas can't afford any adverse publicity right now. Particularly the kind represented by this—this near snafu." He hesitated. "For that matter, neither can I."

"It's not a matter of—" I started, but Swallow interposed, "I've done a couple of radio scripts in which bodies were moved from the spot where—"

This time I interrupted him. "Wait a minute, all of you. What is this? Surely there can't be any objection to calling Homicide."

I looked from one face to another. Nobody came out to my side. One of the girls said, "Can't we just go home? Golly!" There was a little murmur of agreement. With her. "Damn it," I said. "Whether you like it or not, I'm calling the cops. Hell, nobody likes being mixed up in a murder."

Raul finally spoke up again. "Shell," he said hesitantly, "why murder? Maybe—"

"No maybe, I'm afraid, Raul." He grimaced and shook his head. It occurred to me that several of the people here had good reason for not wanting their names on the front pages—particularly under black headlines either hinting or screaming of not only murder but pagan orgies.

I mentally said the hell with it and took a couple of steps toward the house, but King jumped forward and grabbed my arm.

"Take your hands off me, King."

He let go, but he said, "Listen, Scott, just because you got a tin badge of some kind,

what the hell makes you think you're running this show? Forget about the cops."

Genova stepped up beside him and seconded the motion almost as forcibly. "I agree with Mr. King. I'm afraid I'll have to insist, Mr. Scott."

"You insist? You insist? And who the hell are you? Will you people get it through your heads that there's been a murder?" I looked at King. "And for your information, friend, that tin badge, as you call it, isn't the only reason I'm phoning."

"You're not phoning."

I ignored that and went on, "I'm a licensed private investigator, sure, and I've got to call the nearest authorities when a body's found or I'll never find another job. But any citizen has to do the same thing."

"Not if nobody else knows about it," said Genova. "And I warn you."

"Raul," I said sharply, "just for the record, have you any objection to my using your phone and calling downtown?"

He hesitated, then shook his head. "Do anything you want, Shell."

"Thanks. Well, then—"

"I warn you, Scott," Genova again. "I must insist that you leave this matter to me. This . . . matter is not any of your business."

"Well, how do you like that?" I said to nobody in particular. "Two seconds more of this and you can damn well bet I'll start making it my business." I stepped up close to him and looked down at him. King was standing on my right, wiggling some of his muscles. I said to Genova, "And will you please stop warning me. If you've got to insist, insist to the police. As far as I'm concerned, that settles it."

All I heard after that, for a little while, was King saying harshly, "No, it doesn't," and then it seemed as if those artistically piled rocks of the waterfall leaped across fifteen feet and landed artistically against the side of my skull. I went sailing backward and my fanny hit the grass and slid a little way and there was a lot of noise inside my head and I wondered where I was at. My ear burned and pain roared along my skull and then I was lying on my back, propped up on my elbows and looking at King, standing six feet from me with the fading sunlight behind him and looking fierce as all hell. I thought he was going to put his foot on my chest and yell like an ape.

I lay there for a few seconds after I could have got up, getting the rage inside me a little more under control, because when two guys who know how to go after each other, there's a very good chance one of them will, literally, get killed. But it was becoming apparent that King didn't know how; he was another guy with muscles in his back and head, and he stood over me now in the traditional, slightly modified John L. Sullivan pose. He cut a pretty picture, but if he'd really wanted to discourage me he should have been kicking me.

When my vision was completely unblurred I could also see the expressions on some of the other faces. Genova's showed open glee, Swallow's an attempt at boredom, and Raul's a worried frown. Helen was biting her lower lip. Right at that moment King cut a much prettier picture than I did.

Genova clapped King appreciatively on one of his mangrove-root shoulders as I got slowly to my feet. King waved Genova out of the way and concentrated on me as I stepped toward him. He was grinning. My hands were down low, almost at my sides, and King must have thought this was going to be a cinch. That was what I wanted him to think. The distance between us narrowed till I was close enough for him to hit me again, and he waved his left hand in what he fondly imagined was a feint.

I brought my open right hand up and

wrapped it around his throat as if I were going to choke him, only I didn't do it slowly and I didn't choke him. As soon as he'd waved that left hand I'd started my right hand up as hard as I could from my side, and I damn near buried its edge between his chin and Adam's apple as he got ready to bust me. He went sailing back with his arms flailing and fell solidly to the ground, out cold before he hit.

Nobody let out a peep as I turned and walked up toward the house.

CHAPTER FIVE

Two uniformed patrolmen pulled on the rope and the weight at the end of it began slowly rising through the water of the swimming pool as photographers' flash bulbs popped. It was after sundown, but Raul had turned on the floodlights around the pool and the scene was brilliantly lit.

It was about half an hour after I'd phoned the police and there was quite a crowd present. Besides the two patrolmen, who had been first to arrive, there were a couple of plainclothes detective sergeants, technical men from the crime lab, and the coroner. The print men hadn't had much to do while the body was in the water, but they were ready and waiting with the surveyor, who had finished most of his work. Ben Nelson, the captain of the Hollywood Detective Division, was supervising operations in person. I'd hoped that Captain Samson might come out from Central Homicide downtown, but Nelson was a good man and I knew him fairly well.

Most of the party guests were in the living room, but Raul, Swallow, and I were out near the pool. I took Raul aside. "Look, I don't give a damn about those other guys, but this doesn't look good for you. This is your home; she's in your swimming pool. You got any ideas about it at all?"

He shook his head, then pulled nervously at his thick mustache. "Another thing, Raul," I went on. "You didn't seem too happy about my calling the cops, either."

He looked at me. "Guess I wasn't too happy. Hell, who would be? But I wasn't thinking straight—I've never been anywhere near a murder before. And what thinking I did was about Evelyn." He frowned. "God, I guess this ties it with her."

"Maybe not, Raul. Might be this mess could even help, gruesome as that sounds."

He shook his head and said bitterly, "Maybe, but I'm afraid this wraps it up. I wish—" he broke it off. "I'll tell you something, Shell. I've been—and still am—a damn fool." He shrugged and walked away.

I went to the edge of the pool as two policemen heaved and the body slid smoothly from the water as more bulbs flashed. In a moment the dead woman was lying suddenly on the grass. Her body had been weighted with a heavy iron grill, and stiff wire was wrapped around her throat and ankles and then attached to the grill. Oscar Swallow, on my left, took two steps toward the body, then dropped to one knee.

"Zoe!" he cried. "My God! She's killed herself."

It didn't mean anything to me for a minute, but it finally struck me as such an obviously screwy remark that I walked up beside Swallow and looked at his face. The shock and horror on his features seemed real enough. While I wondered, Captain Nelson's men closed in efficiently.

An hour later Zoe's body had been wrapped in the gray rubber sheet and hauled away in the white basket. We were still in the living room again, but it didn't look the same now. All five of the girls sat close together on a huge divan, Raul and I stood behind them

leaning against the piano, and King and Genova sat in deep chairs on our left. Swallow sat at all by himself at the bar. Captain Nelson, flanked by the two detective sergeants, stood in front of us all.

He and the two sergeants had already talked to us one at a time in another room; now looked at Raul. "I guess that about does it," Mr. Evans, who took this group together about two this afternoon, except for Mr. Genova, who came a little later, and Mr. Scott, who arrived after four o'clock?" Raul said, "That's right."

The Captain went on, "And there was a similar gathering here last Thursday night?"

Raul nodded. "Except for the two girls on the end there." He indicated a couple of girls named Susan and Peggy. "Then Archer Block was here, too—he's another writer from the studio."

Nelson turned to Genova. "And that gathering was your idea, Mr. Genova?"

Genova said testily, "As I have already explained twice, Captain, we got together—Raul, Swallow, Block, some of the cast, and I—primarily to go over the shooting script of 'Jungle Girl.' I can't expect you to understand it"—here, Captain Nelson frowned a little—but we're already running over our budget and have five more days of shooting. It was imperative that we discuss ways of cutting expenses. That's all there was to it."

Captain Nelson sighed, then looked slowly over all of us. "All right," he said. "It's pretty obvious that Miss Zoe Townsend came to this house last Thursday night, while most of you were gathered here, and was murdered. She's been out in that pool ever since. And yet none of you knows anything about it, none of you even saw her, you don't even know why she'd come here in the first place." He paused and looked at Raul. "Anybody feel like adding anything?"

Nobody spoke for a moment, then Genova said, "No, don't have anything to add, but I hope none of my people will be tied up. I couldn't afford—"

Nelson interrupted him. "Mr. Genova. Whether you can afford it or not, if any of your people hold out anything on this case they'll be tied up. For quite a while."

Genova looked sick. King had been sitting quietly, with one hand kneading his throat gently. Now he said a bit hoarsely, but deliberately as always, "How about the papers? So help me, if this gets into the papers..." He didn't finish, but glared around the room. He let the glare stop on me. We were back where we'd started. Now he had company: Genova gave me a glare too.

Nelson didn't reply to King—there wasn't much he could say, as reporters had already come and gone—but he flipped his notebook shut. "O.K. If nobody has anything to add, you can all go home. You know what I told you—we'll likely want to talk to all of you again."

There were three or four simultaneous sighs. The girls got up as I walked over to Captain Nelson and outside with him. I knew him pretty well; not nearly so well as I knew Captain Samson downtown, but well enough to talk to. We walked out toward the pool and I said, "Incidentally, Ben, I wasn't even here Thursday night."

He grinned at me, pulled out a pack of cigarettes, and offered me one. I lit them for us and he said, "I don't figure you knocked off anybody, Shell."

"Thanks. You figure she got it Thursday night?"

"The Friday morning. Not much doubt about that, but we'll know more after the autopsy. Job was done in a hurry, too."

I knew what he meant. She'd been strangled by somebody's hands, then wired to

the heavy grill of Raul's barbecue and dumped in the handiest spot, the pool.

I said, "What's this about her coming here? And I understand you talked to most of these people yesterday."

"Not me personally; Sergeant Price from Missing Persons did, though." He looked at me. "Gail named Lola Sherrard reported this Townsend missing on Saturday morning. Missing as of Thursday night. Said this Townsend took off for here—your friend's place—about eight p.m. or a little before on Thursday. Never came back. Well, now we know why."

"Yeah. Anybody here know she was coming?"

He shook his head. "Not so far as we know. Apparently none of them did. She just up and came, uninvited."

"What for?"

"God knows. Well, dig into it deeper. Maybe the roommate can help us. You know how it is with most missing-person beefs, Shell. But we'll check it now."

"Uh-huh. Well, let me know if you want me, Ben—or want anything."

"Don't worry." He raised an eyebrow at me. "Say, you're not on this thing, are you? Officially?"

"No." I thought about Genova and King warning me, and King slugging me, and added, "But I'm interested."

He grunted and headed for the pool. I went back into the house. A couple of the girls had left and Swallow was just leaving. Raul was mixing drinks, so I went over to the bar and took the bourbon and water he handed me. He looked as unhappy and harried as I'd ever seen him.

Helen walked slowly across the room, a fur coat draped over one shoulder. "How about one for me, Raul?" Then to me. "Hello, Shell. Glad you came?"

I gave her a small smile. "Well, yes and no. But it hasn't all been unpleasant." The three of us chatted idly, sipping our drinks. It was pretty deadly. Finally I said to Helen. "Cheer up, for God's sake. A long face won't help anything."

She brightened a bit, then took a long swallow of the Scotch and soda. She made a face, then gave me a pre-pool smile. "Better?"

"Much. Now I go for you."

"I'm disappointed in you, Shell."

"Oh?"

"Uh-huh. You didn't pull out a hair."

I was looking at Helen, but I heard Raul choke on the last of his drink. "Give me time," I said. "Say, how'd you get here?"

"With King."

"Uh... you know what I'm thinking?" "Well, hurry up, then. I've had enough of King."

I turned to Raul. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Sure, Shell. Sorry about everything."

"Don't be. Hell, I'm on your side, if that's anything."

"It is." He gave me a grin. "Beat it."

Helen and I walked to my Cadillac and climbed in. She lay back against the cushions and relaxed on the drive into Hollywood, and we chatted casually, working the depression further out of our minds and getting back nearly to normal. Helen commented on my Cadillac, a new black job that I'd bought to replace the sick-yellow '41 convertible I'd driven for ten years until it got blown up in Las Vegas along with a hell of a fine guy. This was a convertible coupé, too, but nice as it was, I sort of missed the old buggy.

As our spirits rose a bit, the conversation began getting more like our earlier exchanges, and finally I had Helen nearly convinced that she hadn't lived till she'd seen the tropical fish in my apartment.

"Fish?" she asked me. "Why fish?" I looked at her. The Cad's top was down

and that beautiful hair of hers streamed in the wind like silver threads. She didn't seem to mind the wind. I said, "They're pretty and a lot of fun. All colors—some even like your hair. Some like your eyes."

"Oh, Lord," she groaned. "That's the nicest thing anybody ever said to me."

"That's not what I meant. I mean these fish are pretty colors. Regular riot. You really should see them. All kinds of tropical—"

She broke in, "All right, Shell. I'll come see the things if you'll just stop talking about them."

I didn't even get to tell her about my new *Rasbora heteromorphus*. But we found other things to talk about until I pulled up in front of the Spartan Apartment Hotel on North Rossmore. I picked up my key at the desk and guided Helen up to my combination living room, bedroom, kitchenette, and bath. My phone was ringing as I unlocked the door, but it stopped when we went inside and I flipped on the lights.

I told her to make herself at home, and headed for the kitchenette. Behind me she let out a little squeal and said, "Oh, they are pretty."

I turned around. The two fish tanks are just inside the living room at the left of the door. The aquarium lights were still on as I'd left them earlier, and Helen was bent over, peering in at the riot of colors.

"Oh, yeah," I said. "The damn fish."

She smiled wickedly at me, then returned to contemplation of the tanks. I went to the kitchenette, returned with two highballs, and handed her one.

"Just happened to have some Scotch and soda," I said, then spent a couple minutes explaining what she was looking at, and led her to the oversized chocolate-brown divan in front of the ersatz fireplace.

"Aren't you going to tell me more about fish?" she asked, smiling.

"Later, later." I sat down beside her. "How do you like the place?"

"Nice. What I've seen of it."

"I'll show you the rest in a minute."

She sipped at her drink, then placed it on the low black coffee table, leaned back against the cushions of the divan, and stretched her long legs out in front of her, high heels sinking into the thick shag nap of the gold carpet. Her eye caught the bright nude on my living-room wall and she said, "That looks like something painted at Raul's pool."

"Doesn't it? Not nearly as nice, though. Say, Helen, you were at Raul's party Thursday night, huh?"

"That's right. It was a much milder party; mostly business."

"This Zoe didn't show up?"

She shook her head. "No. . . I know you're a detective. Are you working?"

I laughed. "Not on the case. But almost everybody there is good and griped at me for getting the cops in."

She nodded. "And the newspapermen." She made a face. "I can't wait to see the papers. They dredged up Dot's yellow bathing suit, you know. The reporters will have a field day with that."

"Yeah." Actually I didn't much care about the men at the party, except for Raul. Both he and Evelyn had been damn nice to me in the past, and anything I could do to help either one of them I'd have been glad to do. And, being me, I'd enjoy helping the women. That made me recall Sherry, and I also thought of something Captain Nelson had told me. It had occurred to me that Sherry might very well be a nickname for Sherrard. I asked Helen, "This Sherry that was in for a little while in the afternoon—what's her full name?"

"Lola Sherrard. Why? You want to look her up in the phone book?"

"No, just wondered. She was Zoe's roommate, huh?"

"That's right."

"And who's this Bondhelm that everybody likes so at all?"

"I don't know exactly. He's got money in 'Jungle Girl.' Anything else, detective?"

I grinned at her and put my drink on the table beside hers. "I'm sorry. I guess I particularly resent the afternoon's grisly complications because they interrupted a highly entertaining episode."

She smiled, her lips thinning. "It's a shame we didn't get our swim. You don't even know if I can swim. I might have sunk."

"No matter. I wouldn't have let you down." She chuckled and looked sideways at me from the dark brown eyes. "I'd have died if you had." She laced her hands behind her head and wiggled slightly against the cushions of the divan. I leaned closer to her. "Well, hell," I said, "I don't have a pool, but I've got a tub."

She laughed and wiggled.

Her face was only a few inches from mine; I looked at her parted lips and leaned closer to them, and the damn phone rang. I thought: The hell with that noise, and kept on leaning. The phone kept on ringing. Helen's eyes widened, then narrowed again, and she unfolded her arms and put them around my neck, still smiling. The smile went away as I pulled her against me and pressed my lips to hers. Her arms tightened, pulling me against her with surprising strength. Pretty soon I didn't know if that ringing was the phone or something inside my head. After long seconds she pulled her mouth from mine and frowned.

"Will you turn that thing off?"

"Come on." I got up, grabbed her hand, and pulled her toward the bedroom.

"Isn't the phone in the front room?"

"Uh-huh. Extension in here." As a matter of fact, there was. The lousy phone was still ringing as I turned on the bedroom lights and walked to the thing. I picked up the receiver and growled, "Yeah?"

"Mr. Scott?"

It was a man's voice. I told him I was Shell Scott while Helen scooted up on the bed and lay down with her head on the pillow. Watching her, I listened as the voice said, "This is Peter Bondhelm, Mr. Scott. I've been trying to get in touch with you. I have a proposition that I believe will interest you."

I almost told him I thought I had a proposition that interested me a hell of a lot more than anything he could offer, but I said, "What is it?"

Helen kicked off her high-heeled pumps and, lying on her back, pulled her feet up under her. The hem of her white dress slid noiselessly up from her knees, baring a long, curving length of golden thigh.

Bondhelm had said something to me, but I hadn't the faintest idea what it was. I asked him, "What was that again? I'm sorry, I missed it."

Bondhelm said, "I want you to come right out to my home if you possibly can, Mr. Scott. It's in connection with the murder of Zoe Townsend. I'd like you to undertake an investigation for me."

Right now what I wanted to investigate wasn't a murder. I said, "Well, I'm tied up at the moment. Just what is it you want?"

"I'll explain all that here, Mr. Scott. I'm at sixteen-twenty Temple Hill Drive."

There was a long pause while neither of us said anything. Helen's knee kept swinging gently. Then Bondhelm said, "There should be at least ten thousand in it for you. Possibly more. A great deal more."

This wasn't quite as intriguing as Helen's thigh yet, but it interested me; over there on the bed, though, was something inflation



"What do you mean, you'd like to try it out for a few days?"

hadn't affected. I forced myself to look somewhere else. That helped, and almost immediately I wondered how it happened that Bondhelm already knew about the murder. There weren't any papers on the streets yet and I was pretty sure it wouldn't have hit the radio or TV broadcasts this soon.

I asked him, "Ten thousand what?"
"Dollars, Mr. Scott. Nice, fat dollars."
"Not so fat. Those are Truman dollars." Obviously I resented Bondhelm.

He let out a little spitter. "I don't understand your attitude, Mr. Scott." His voice hardened a little. "I'm offering you good money to conduct an investigation. If you don't want it, say so."

I kept my eyes on the ash tray by the phone's base. I wasn't my usual self; ordinarily a ten-thousand-and-up fee would have sent me scampering. And I was curious to know what Bondhelm's interest in this was. I was trying to figure out how much I'd have left after taxes, and if, considering everything, it was worth it, when Bondhelm said impatiently, "Mr. Scott? I am going to hire an investigator. I had hoped it would be you. However, I want somebody tonight. Well?"

I squeezed my eyes shut. Five agonizing seconds went by. "O.K.," I told him. "I'll talk it over—it'll won't take too long."

"Fine. The time it takes depends on you. Sixteen twenty Temple Hill Drive. I'll be expecting you." He hung up.

I slowly reached the receiver and walked over to the bed. I sat down beside Helen and worked up ten per cent of a grin. "Honey," I said, "I give you my house. I've got to take off for a few minutes. Won't take long. Be right back. You sit tight. Yesiree."

She kept looking at the ceiling and sighed. I said, "I'm about to make lots of money. I'll wine you and date you."

"I still hadn't moved her. I said, 'You relax. Freshen up. Have a drink. Huh?'"

"Get lost," she said.

Her knee stopped moving. I reached over and gave it a small push, hoping that would start it going again. It didn't.

She finally turned her head and looked at me. She smiled a little, but it was apparent she wasn't hilarious. "Don't be too long, darling," she said softly.

"I'm practically back." I hadn't worn my gun to the afternoon party, so now I went to the bureau drawer and took out the short-nosed .38 Colt Special and the leather holster. I took off my coat, strapped on the gun with great deliberation, then put the coat back on.

"See," I said. "Important business. Very hush-hush. Secret Service."

She smiled a little more broadly. "All right. But, as I said, don't be gone all night. I've got a big day on 'Jungle Girl' tomorrow."

The address Bondhelm had given me was a two-story stucco building on the corner of Temple Hill Drive and North Beachwood Drive, about three miles from my place. I made it there in four minutes. A man opened the door when I rang.

"Mr. Bondhelm?" He nodded, and I said, "I'm Shell Scott."

"Fine. Come in, please." He was a monstrous man, perhaps an inch shorter than I, but with the kind of fat that usually comes from gluttony rather than overeating. He shut the door, then walked ahead of me into a room off the hall we were in. He walked ponderously into the room, turned around in front of a mammoth overstuffed chair, aimed his gigantic fanny at it, and fell backward. Air whooshed upward from the cushions as he let out a sigh, then looked up at me from eyes half hidden in the folds of fat in his cherubic face. Perspiration glistened on his pink cheeks and forehead. He made me think of a slug.

He was slow-moving, but he was fast when it came to explaining what he wanted of me.

He nodded me to a chair already placed opposite his, and when I sat down he said with surprising rapidity, "I know of the night's events and that you were present when Zoe Townsend's body was discovered. I want you to find out, if possible, who murdered the girl, and report to me. The sooner the better."

He stopped. I asked him, "She was—that is, did you know Miss Townsend?"

"Never saw her."

I let it ride. "You said something about ten thousand dollars. Or more?"

He bobbed his head. He lifted one pudgy hand to a table alongside his chair, picked up some folded papers, then bent slightly forward and extended them toward me. As I took them he said, "I am the major financial backer of the movie 'Jungle Girl.' I own seventy-five per cent of the stock—seventy-five of the one hundred shares—and Louis Genova owns the remaining twenty-five. I have executed that writer's assignment, which you hold, transferring two shares of my stock to you. The two shares in the production are your fee if you take the case."

He was beaming at me as though he'd just informed me I was his heir. I looked at the top paper, written in a sloppy hand and beginning, "I, the undersigned, do assign and transfer . . . and going on to say that stock was transferred to Sheldon Scott."

"Huh," I said, "wait a minute. What the hell is this? I thought you said dollars."

"Same thing," he said. "Good as gold. This makes you part of the movie industry."

"That doesn't overwhelm me."

"And I grant you that the par value of the two shares is only eight thousand dollars. But say the net profits of 'Jungle Girl' are a million dollars. You hold in your hand the equivalent of twenty thousand dollars."

"Slow down, Mr. Bondhelm. Why not say a million dollars? That stinks! Not about a net a million. And suppose it's a flop? I got a hand full of paper. I'd prefer to have money. If I take the case."

He shook his head, once left, once right. "No. I can't give you money. I have only one offer."

I looked at the "potential profits" in my hand again. I thought about Helen. I said, "Mr. Bondhelm, the proposition isn't entirely unattractive, but I'd have to know more about your interest in the case. Maybe it's unusual, but it's the way I work. Also, what if I don't learn anything—or the police have the killer tomorrow?"

He didn't answer for quite a while and his eyes did their disappearing act again. He was a strange character; I didn't like him at all. He opened his eyes wide and stared impassively at me. "You would keep the shares, Mr. Bondhelm, if you contributed materially to the solution of the case. Naturally if you ah, accomplish nothing at all, you couldn't expect so large a fee. He paused, then went on rapidly, "But inasmuch as it seems obvious that one of those present at the Thursday-night gathering at Mr. Evans' home killed the girl, I would naturally expect you to concentrate most of your efforts on them. I . . . have my reasons."

He sighed and leaned slightly forward, then handed a wadded handkerchief to his pocket and wiped it over his perspiring face. "I want to be very frank with you, Mr. Scott," he said. "I make a good deal of money through investment in motion pictures. Mr. Genova's last picture was a flop, as you say. His financial backers left him. None of the banks would take another chance with him. I was the only man he could get to finance the movie. We formed a corporation to produce 'Jungle Girl' and he put up all the money he has hands-on—one hundred thousand dollars."

I advanced the remaining three hundred thousand. Before I did, however, I had inserted into our contract a clause stating that

if at any time the picture went three per cent over the budget, all rights were relinquished to me. You can understand that it would be to my advantage if the film did go over the budget."

The old pirate. I was beginning to understand, all right. Over the budget equals Genova out—and Bondhelm in the driver's seat. I could understand now the frantic efforts of Louis Genova Productions to keep expenses down. I could also understand that. I was getting tired of Peter Bondhelm.

I said, "In other words, all I have to do is pin the kill on somebody in the picture, huh? For two shares of maybe worthless stock I frame somebody and ruin the budget."

He said easily, "Not at all, Mr. Scott. You will decide—determine who is the guilty party. It merely seems apparent to me that someone from Genova Productions is the logical choice. I have heated and mopped his face again. I will say this: If, by any accident, you should interrupt shooting—or be forced to interrupt it—and those interruptions worked to my benefit, there would be more shares waiting here for you."

The slimy sonofabitch was trying to pay me to wreck the movie. I got up and tossed the papers into his lap, then turned and started out, but he yelled after me.

"Mr. Scott? You misunderstand me. Please. I've been very frank with you, haven't I? Please don't think I want you to do anything illegal or underhanded."

I turned around and walked back to the chair he was still in. Maybe he needed help to get out of it. I said, "Now you listen a minute, friend. I interrupted a highly pleasant evening to come out here because I thought you had a legitimate offer. I wouldn't even touch the case with strings on it. Not for all your damn stock."

He calmed down and seemed to become quite agreeable. The upshot of it was that I could do it my way. Finally I said, "And why me? There are a lot of other detectives—and some of them might go for your strings."

He cleared his throat. "I understand you are acquainted with one or two of the Genova people. Also you were present at Mr. Evans' this evening. Obviously that alone gives you a great advantage over anybody else I might hire. I might also hire Mr. Scott, but your excellent record is well-known."

"One other thing." I thought a moment and stretched the framework of my question a little to see if I could get more. "The dope on Zoe's murder hasn't hit the papers or broadcasts yet; so just how did you know all this so soon?"

He shook his head again, left, right. "No. It isn't necessary for you to know."

Back at the Spartan I trotted eagerly up and stuck my head inside.

"Hey, Helen," I yelled. "Yoo-hoo." The lights were burning brightly, but there was no answer. "Here I am," I cried. "I'm back!"

I shut and locked the door and there still wasn't any answer. I waited a moment. Oh, no! I thought. She can't have done this to me. Then I started thinking clearly again: She was asleep. Well, I thought dily, let her sleep. The door was already in bed, that was what. I turned out the living room lights and tiptoed into the bedroom. I was wrong: That wasn't what. There was still the indication of Helen's long, lovely body on the bedspread, but the long, lovely body was gone. A note on the table—resting against the phone, of all places—said, "Shell, darling, it got a little late for me. And I was tired. Did you make lots of money?"

I undressed anyway, showered, and fifteen minutes after I'd torn up the note I climbed sadly between cold sheets. I'd looked everywhere in the apartment, and Helen had gone, all right. The shape I was in, I had even looked under the bed.

The first alarm pulled me halfway up from delicious, dream-drugged sleep and left me suspended in warmth and drowsiness. Then the second alarm banged against my car and I blinked stupidly around me, remembering the party, the pool, and finally Helen. The strange thing was, I'd dreamt of Sherry.

Twenty minutes later, still only about one-third awake, but dressed in a tan gabardine suit, brown knit-wool tie, Cordovans, and my 38 Colt, I went downstairs, climbed into my Cad, and headed for breakfast.

As I drove away from the Spartan, I flashed my chrome happily at a two-year-old Chevy parked around the corner on Clinton. On Sunset Boulevard I turned right and headed for Lyle's, where I often have my meager breakfasts when I'm too lazy to cook my own mush. Automatically I checked the rear-view mirror and idly noted another two-year-old Chevy about a block behind me. A green one this time; I couldn't remember what color the other one had been. Not that it made any difference; it was a little too early in this case for guys with submachine guns to be following me.

With a number of other people, I feel that the first half hour or so of each morning is best forgotten. I hate life, people, food, damn near everything—at least till I have coffee. Lyle's was up ahead on my right at the corner, and as I pulled in to the curb and parked, a Chevrolet went by. Just for hell of it I sat in the car and watched it as it went a block past St. Andrews Place and took a right on Western. I got out, bought copies of the Times, Examiner, and Crier from the metal stand in front of Lyle's, and dropped my three dimes in the slots. The Times and Examiner were for news; the Crier for dirt. I'd barely glanced at the headlines when I spotted the green Chevy again, and this time I was damned sure it was the same one. The driver had driven around the block and parked on St. Andrews facing Sunset—and me. It looked as if he were waiting there to pick me up when I left. I didn't get it.

Neither did I like it, so I folded the papers under my arm, walked across St. Andrews, and turned right. As I approached the Chevy, the man sitting behind the wheel ignored me completely. Maybe too completely—and maybe I was in even worse shape than I usually am before breakfast. But I wanted a good look at this character, just in case.

I walked around to the driver's side of the car and he didn't once glance at me. A very uncurious boy, I stopped and leaned on the door, and he finally looked up.

"Morning," I said. "Haven't I seen you somewhere before?"

He was a little man with a narrow face and horn-rimmed spectacles perched on his sharp nose. A small bald spot was eating its way outward from the top of his head. "Why good morning," he said. He looked puzzled. "I don't believe so, sir."

"Maybe around the Wilshire Country Club," I said pleasantly.

He blinked at me. It occurred to me that all this was a bit silly if he was a tourist examining the snog. I said, "I made you from across the street and thought I'd let you know. He didn't say anything to that, but if for any reason he had been trailing me, he'd know what I meant. I left him and jay-walked back to Lyle's, wondering if I were cracking up."

In Lyle's I ordered toast and coffee, then skimmed through the Crier, which was on top of the stack of papers. The front page was having a fit over the murder of Zoe Townsend. It was all there, complete with sly and indignant conjectures about bathing suits in pools, Hollywood orgies, love nests. I was reminded again that those who express

the greatest shock and most towering indignation about alleged immorality or indecency are almost invariably the ones most avid for the intimate and sensual details. I read on. The police were confident. A picture of the body under a sheet was on the second page. It was the usual coverage, the kind of story I was used to by now.

A waitress brought my toast and coffee as I glanced at Fanny Hillman's movie-page column, "The Eye at the Keyhole." I'd never seen Fanny, but with a kind of masochism I had from time to time read her column, and I had long ago come to the conclusion that she was referring to the bathroom keyhole. She wasn't in the same league as the big-shot gossip mongers, being a relative newcomer, but she had her own following of morons.

Fanny was Hollywood's Pandora with a new box to open every day including Sunday; she was another self-appointed guardian of public immorals, and it was safe to bet that if she had her way General Motors would swing hastily into mass production of chastity girdles. She was a news maker, quite literally, and exaggeration was her legitimate technique; people were potential items, no more, and she used them like a good bank.

I gritted my teeth and plunged into her column. It took a man with a strong stomach to read the stuff, but to write it Fanny must have had a stronger stomach than a mortician who brings his lunch to work. The column began:

The stark-naked body of deliciously lovely Zoe Townsend, brutally strangled by a "person or persons unknown," was last night discovered in the swimming pool of one of our town's foremost directors. . . .

Zoe hadn't been naked, but I particularly liked that "person or persons unknown" bit, wondering what was the record number of persons ever to strangle a body. I stopped being even slightly amused when I reached the end of the column. I got so uninterested that I almost strangled, myself, on my first gulp of coffee—the only gulp I was going to get—and punched a thumbnail through a halftone photo of Lili St. Cyr. Fanny ended each day's column with what she called, coyly, "Can You Guess?" Usually I didn't try; this morning I didn't have to.

Even if Bondhelm hadn't offered me what seemed like a potentially attractive deal for working on Zoe's murder, I would already have had a more than usual interest in the case for three other reasons: my affection for Raul himself and a desire to help him in any way I could, the fact that I'd been given a lot of hell last night and don't like clubhouse ordering me around or shoving me around, and the further fact that until this case was satisfactorily cleared up a number of people were going to be damned unhappy with me. But now, with the appearance of "Can You Guess?" I had what was, at least for me, a better reason for tying into the case than even Bondhelm's "possible twenty thousand." The item:

What Hollywood He-Man bruised what Hollywood detective last night when that detective angled his nose where it didn't belong? Is the rumor true that the detective promised to be good and crawled back into his . . . shell? I read the item again, my coffee cup poised in the air. Once word gets around a town that a private investigator is yellow or can easily be scared off a case, that investigator is in trouble. A little of that kind of libel is a lot. I put my cup back in the saucer slowly, tossed a dollar bill on the counter, and left.

At last my dream was going to come true: I was going to meet Fanny Hillman. I'd been so gripped when I drove away from Lyle's that I almost forgot to check the Chevy. I took a look, though: no Chevy.

Fanny rarely worked at the Crier building,

as she had her own office in a little building straight down Sunset about two miles. I was there a few minutes after I read the item. I parked in front of the building and sat in the car for another sixty seconds. I couldn't just barge in and bust Fanny in the snoot, as much as that idea appealed to me at the moment, so I waited till I'd calmed down a little. And when I'd cooled a bit I started wondering how Fanny knew about the beef I'd had with King. So far as I knew, nobody had mentioned that business to the police.

Next door to the office building is a malt shop with a pay phone on the wall. I went inside and called Captain Nelson at the Hollywood Division. When he came on I said, "Hello, Ben. Shell Scott. Anything new?"

"Nothing fancy."

"You see Fanny Hillman's column?"

"I did. That was you, wasn't it?"

"How'd you guess? Yeah, it was me and King. That's why I called. Did you or any of your boys give that to the press?"

"No, we didn't," he growled. "You know why? We didn't know about it. Listen, Shell. I spent some time talking to you all alone, just like I did with the rest of that crowd, and this is the first sign of a fight. All you mentioned was a little beef. That's to be expected, but a fight, no. You want to explain why you held out on me?"

"Sorry, Ben. It didn't seem too important at the time—as long as I did get the call in to you. And I imagine Genova must have told the rest to keep their lips buttoned." I briefed him quickly on the beef I'd had about phoning him, then added, "I can understand why neither King nor Genova would want to get splashed in the papers, but I overruled their objections."

"You got any more you forgot to tell me?" His voice was edged with sarcasm.

"No. One more thing, that is. I'm working on the case now for a client. If anything important comes up, you'll get it."

"Yeah," Nelson knew, as did most of the L. A. police, that I had a long record of working with the authorities instead of against them—particularly because I'd worked so long almost hand in glove with Samson, the Central Homicide captain downtown. Then he asked me, "How about Evans? He give you any trouble?"

"Raul? Not especially. He just wasn't happy about a body in his pool. I hope you don't lean on him too hard."

"We won't lean on anybody especially till we get more. But the dame was at his place. You got any ideas why?"

"Nothing yet."

"O.K.," he said. "Say, Shell, how about that yellow suit in the pool?"

I laughed, told him I'd see him later, and hung up. Then, not laughing, I headed for Fanny. Her office was one of four in the building, and apparently consisted of two or three rooms. Inside the first frosted glass door I found a guy at a typewriter and asked him, "Fanny Hillman around?"

"Yeah, she's here."

"This 'Eye at the Keyhole' thing. When's the Crier's deadline for it?"

He glanced up at me and said, "Depends what edition. Eleven p.m. for the morning edition. What's the Crier? He broke it off, started a snirk, then killed it. Maybe I didn't know him, but he knew me."

He jerked a thumb toward another frosted glass door behind him. "You'll find dear Miss Hillman right back there." I didn't wait to ask him if that "dear" was an expression of admiration or contempt, but followed his thumb to Fanny's door.

The old bat gave me a blank stare as I came in. She would hit me as fast as Bondhelm, but give her a few more years past forty and she'd make it. Her pale eyes looked at me from a round, vacuous face.

She knew a galloping horror. She had

hands of the type generally called "dishpan hands," but the same thing might have been said of her face. She looked like a woman who would disappear every Halloween and turn up dancing around a bubbling pot; give her a broom and you'd lose her.

Still giving me the blank stare, she said, "Yes?" She had a voice like Howdy Doodys'.

I decided to play it light. Maybe this hag had really believed her own words.

"Good morning, Miss Hillman," I said pleasantly. "My name's Scott. I uh—I gave her the nicest smile I could find—crawled out of my shell to correct a misapprehension. About your 'Can You Guess' item."

She sucked at something in one of her teeth. Or maybe one of Dr. Cowen's teeth. She knew who I was, all right. "I'm very busy," she said. "Can't you get to the point?"

"Yeah, lady, I'll get to the point." Just like that he'd popped me. Here I was all sweetest and light and damn near ready to tickle her under the chin, and she was giving me this old routine. I slammed the door behind me and walked up to her desk. I came at her so fast that she scooted backward three inches in her swivel chair.

I said deliberately, "The point is pretty damn obvious, don't you think? In the first place, I don't like my name in your sticky column. In the second place, I resent libel and slander. Specifically I object to the implied accusation that a local ape man made me crawl, which he didn't, and the further implication that I could be scared off a case. Maybe it could happen, but it hasn't yet."

She said sweetly, "What case, Mr. Scott? What are you talking about? And I'm certain your name isn't in the column . . . the sticky column, I believe you said?"

I'd had a death grip on the Crier, opened to this dear girl's words; now I slid it across the desk at her and started to point out my name. Then I stopped. Actually, my name wasn't there.

She had noticed my hesitation and was smiling at me, happy as a clam. I said, "It's obvious who you were talking about?"

"Whom, Mr. Scott. About whom I was talking, you mean."

"You know bloody well what I mean!"

Grammar lessons she was giving me. Pretty soon old sweetest-and-light Scott's brain arteries were going to open up and start squirting at each other. I sprayed air through my teeth and said more slowly, and more quietly, "Look, you know that's me whom-whom—well, damn it."

Oh, she was happy now. She was having a ball. Only once in about a year do I get as gripped at anybody as I now was at this quivering monstrosity, and a guy never builds toward peaceful relations feeling the way I was feeling.

I took a couple of deep breaths and said, "Miss Hillman, I don't know where you got your information—though I've got an idea—but the item's as phony as the dice. For your information, I'm the boy who called the tops—and when I did it I hadn't promised to be good. Also, I have a client for whom I'm now investigating the murder of Zoe Townsend. Tooth and nail. There's an item for your column. For free."

"I'm afraid it isn't very newsworthy, Mr. Scott."

"Well, it's true. Does that eliminate it?"

She didn't say anything. I said, "I came in here to ask you, pleasantly, if you'd correct the erroneous impression you gave in this column. I say quite seriously that it could be damaging to me. Now, how about it?"

"That's absurd. If that's all. . ."

"It's not all. Where did you get your information? From King? It had to be from somebody involved."

No answer. She sucked at something in her teeth again. This time she got it.

I leaned forward on her desk, the palms of my hands moist on its smooth surface. "Tell me this," I said. "Do you print anything that anybody tells you? Is a phone call all you need? I'll give you some hot items: Ava Gardner just shot Joe Stalin; President Truman confesses; Arthur Godfrey—"

"Please, Mr. Scott!" Her face wasn't pale white any more; it was getting as red as mine. "Get out of here!" she screeched. "I won't listen to any more of this. . . this. . ."

That was all. No use kidding myself. Fanny and I would never see eye to eye at that keyhole. I turned and started to leave, and now that she'd apparently survived the battle she gave the knife one more ladylike twist: "If it had been you in my column, Mr. Scott, what would you have done about it?"

I yanked my head back toward her. "What would you say to my hauling Zoe's killer in here and popping him in your lap tomorrow? With instructions to brush up on his technique?"

Her round face got very mean-looking all of a sudden, then went back to normal, which was worse. She said icily, "Oh? Then you already know who the killer is. Maybe I do have an item."

"Now wait a minute—" I choked it off. This was a losing game and I'd had it. I left the door open as I went out. Fanny and I hadn't been engaged before, but we were sure as hell quits now.

I got some more eyeballing as I left and I gave out glares indiscriminately. In the Cad, I made a highly illegal U turn in the middle of the street, buzzed back to Lyle's and had cardboard toast and two cups of brown water, then leaped back into the Cad, angrily ground the gears, and jerked away from the curb like a madman.

Just as I shifted out of low, something went plunk against the car somewhere and I wondered if I'd sprung something in the Cad's innards, or maybe hit a pedestrian. If a pedestrian, I hoped it was one of Fanny's faithful followers. But the rear-view mirror showed the road clear behind me and the motor continued to purr sweetly.

Twenty minutes later when I parked in front of Genova's studio I was back to what would pass for normal. I was a little irritated with myself for getting so worked up in the first place, but even before I'd read today's Crier I'd had enough of Fanny Hillman to last me for several years. Now it was for life.

I got out of the Cad, slammed the door, and stared at the gleaming black side of the car for a few seconds while my throat got slightly drier. Now I knew what that plunk I'd heard back at Lyle's meant.

There was a neat round hole—obviously a bullet hole—in the metal of the car just back of where I'd been sitting when I erupted so violently away from Lyle's. Apparently I could thank Fanny for one thing: She'd got me mad enough to save my life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

I poked my finger into the hole in the Cad's side, remembering I hadn't heard a shot. I could have missed it as I ground the gears. A lot of things were puzzling me. First of all, why anybody would be after me already. Within the last half hour somebody had tried to kill me, murder me, and they'd come so close I could feel the muscles tightening involuntarily in my back and I looked around me nervously. But I didn't know beans about who had killed Zoe, and that was the only case I had any connection with now. And why hadn't I been shot when I stepped out of Lyle's? There was an explanation for that, though, which made sense. If a man wanted to shoot me and be far away before the kill was noticed, his best bet would be to

wait till I was in the car, where I might not be spotted for a while, rather than drop me in plain view on the sidewalk. There was still the why.

I opened the car door again and hunted around inside. I was lucky enough to find the mangled slug and now even if I didn't know the why, I knew two other things: one, that some guy had shot at me; two, he knew he'd missed. With one more glance all around me, I headed for the entrance to Louis Genova Productions.

The studio stretched a couple of city blocks on La Brea and was actually named Arcade Studios; Genova was merely renting space here till "Jungle Girl" was completed. I walked across the sidewalk and through the gate, and picked up the pass that Bondhelm had said he'd have ready for me. The guard waved me in after telling me where the offices were. Inside the Administration Building, at an information desk, I asked another guard where Genova was.

"Where? Either in his office," he pointed—"down the hall there and to the right, or maybe on the sound stage under." He pointed again, in another direction.

"They're shooting 'Jungle Girl'?"

"Yep. Won't let you in if they're shooting. They're on Stage Three."

"Where would I find the writers? They in this building?" He nodded and I asked, "How about Oscar Swallow?"

Down the hall and round to the right. Numbers on the doors. He's in seven."

I thanked him, went down the hall and right to number seven. The door was ajar so I poked my head inside and said, "Hello."

I got more out of that hello than I usually do, and I had only a brief glimpse of the luscious La Sherrard before she fell down. She was sitting behind a desk at the right of the door, her eyes closed and dark brows furrowed in obvious concentration. She was wearing a white blouse and white blouse, and a little frilly handkerchief was tucked into the V of the blouse.

A pencil was crossways between her white teeth, but that wasn't important. She was tilted far back in a swivel chair, with her feet propped on the edge of the near side of the desk, and as I stuck my head inside, Sherry's head jerked up and she opened her eyes wide. She let out a startled "Oh!" and yanked her feet off the desk, and her swivel chair started scooting out from under her. In a flash of white, blue skirt, and waving pink arms, she went sailing down to the floor as her chair slid back against the wall.

I threw the door open and jumped to help her. She was sitting on the floor behind her desk with her mouth open wide, looking appealing as sin. She lifted her face up to me and said, "Golly!" Then she held her hands toward me so I could help her up.

I grabbed her hands and pulled. "I'm sorry," I said. "Aye you hurt?"

"I don't . . . think so."

She looked even better than she had during the brief time she'd been at last night's party. The soft red lips were in a small pout as she blinked her clear blue eyes at me, then suddenly she laughed. "Wasn't that silly? Hello. Guess I should lock the door if I'm going to sit like that."

"My fault," I said. "I shouldn't have popped in the way I did. I thought maybe Swallow would be here."

When I said Swallow's name she frowned once more and the amusement went out of her lovely face. "Him," she said, contemptuously. "Those things should be in before long. I think he's on the set. Oh, sit down." She nodded toward another chair and pulled her own chair back under her. She sat down gingerly, then bounced a couple of times and beamed at me. "All well," she said. I thought my teeth were going to start chattering.

When I got settled she asked me, "What are you doing here at the studio, Shell?"

"I told you last night that I'm a detective. Well, now I'm working. On what happened at Raul's after you left."

She pressed her lips together. "Zoe?"

"Uh-huh. Sherry, didn't you report her missing?"

She hesitated for a moment, then said, "Yes. She's— We lived together. I liked her a lot."

"I'm sorry, Sherry. If you don't want to talk about it—"

"I do, though. Is that what you're doing, Shell? Looking for . . ."

"For whoever killed her," I said. I thought about everything that had happened in the last few hours and added, "I've got some very good reasons of my own for wanting to find the one that did it."

"I know who did it," she said flatly.

I stared at her. That one had jarred me. "What? What do you mean?"

She sighed. "I've already told the police," she said. "They told me I don't have any proof." She sighed and fell silent.

I didn't want her to stop now. "Maybe I could help," I said. "Anything at all might help, Sherry. Can you tell me?"

She was quiet for a while longer, then she looked at me. "I think I'd like to," she said. "Shell, Zoe left our house Thursday night—you know there was another bunch at Raul's that night?" I nodded and she went on, "Zoe hated Oscar Swallow, and I don't blame her a bit." Her face looked angry now. "She told me weeks ago that she'd ruin him any way she could, and that's why she went to Raul's. She was going to do something to get even with him in front of all the people who were there, all the people who knew him and worked with him. She left about eight o'clock and never came back. Finally I told the police she hadn't come home. Then just this morning they talked to me again and I told them why she went to Raul's. I don't think the police have even said anything to him—and I thought they'd arrest him." She stopped, staring at the corner of her desk.

Now I was getting something I could sink my teeth into. "What was she going to do?"

Sherry shook her head. "I don't know. She just said she was going to 'get' him. She'd found out something about him she said would ruin him out of town. I don't know what it was." She looked at me and said defiantly, "But it's perfectly obvious what happened. Before she even got inside Raul's, Oscar Swallow murdered her. I just—"

She broke it off in midsentence, because right then Oscar Swallow walked in.

"Well, hello, there," he said brightly to me, each word enunciated with how-now-brown-coo clarity, and he gave me a smile. It was a tight smile, though, and a poor one, and it seemed evident that he'd heard Sherry's last remark. He could hardly have missed it.

"Morning, Swallow," I said. Then I pushed it a little. "We were just talking about you."

"Oh? Well, by Jove. Nothing foul, I hope."

I grinned at him. "I'm not sure. You been on the set?"

"Yes, I have. I have been there all morning watching the temple scenes. It's still quite a thrill seeing one of my ideas come to life, so to speak." He took out a cigarette and lit it.

"What brings you here, Mr. Scott?"

I was wondering if he'd mentioned being on the set all morning so I'd feel he hadn't been playing target practice with me, or if it was only casual conversation. I said, "The Townsend murder. I've got a client who wants me to try finding her killer."

He was slightly contemptuous. "Do you expect to find him here?"

"Seems logical."

He shrugged. Sherry had been sitting quietly up till now. She said to Swallow, "Don't you feel anything? Now that she's dead?"

"Sherry, dear, I'm naturally terribly sorry. Zoe was a lovely thing, and she was my secretary for a long time. But there's nothing we can do now."

Sherry didn't answer; she got up and walked out of the room.

Swallow slid up on a corner of his desk and hiked up the carefully creased leg of his trousers. "Did you want to see me?"

"Yeah, I thought I'd drop in. I'd like to talk to all the people who were at Raul's Thursday night. Just to get the picture."

"This is part of your investigation?"

"You could call it that."

"I smiled." I won't be much help. I remember little of that Thursday night. Mr. Genova insists that there be no late parties, or, ah, carousing when we're shooting the following day—but I'm not in the movie. At any rate, I fear I drank to excess. I passed out and slept on the floor most of the evening."

"When was this?"

"Quite early Thursday night. Shortly after seven, I believe." He chuckled. "That's what they tell me. But my point is, Mr. Scott, that I could hardly have had anything to do with Zoe's death—assuming that she was killed at Raul's house. I'm simply trying to make things easier for you, you understand. You see, you can eliminate me immediately."

"Sure," I said. "I just eliminated you." I got up. "Everybody else on the set?"

"Everybody you'll want to see, I imagine. Except Genova; he's in his office."

I walked to the door and turned. "Oh, Swallow, one more thing. When the police pulled her from the pool last night you said something to the effect that she'd killed herself. Is it true?"

"Oh," he said, "did I? Perhaps I did. Well," he went on slowly, "Zoe and I worked together for quite some time. We were—rather close for a while. It simply seemed incredible that anybody could have murdered her. Naturally I assumed. . . ."

"Any reason why she should have killed herself?"

"No. I don't know of any reason. It was—merely an assumption."

I thought Swallow looked uncomfortable. I let it ride for now. Sherry came back in from outside then and walked over behind her desk. I said, "O.K. See you later, Swallow. You too, Sherry."

I gave me a bright smile as I went out. I knocked on Genova's door and went in when he yelled from inside the room. He had a French phone at his ear, but when he saw me his thick black eyebrows drew down and he growled, "All right—good-by," into the mouthpiece and hung up noisily. He kept frowning at me. "What do you want?" he asked testily.

"Just like to talk to you, if it's all right, Genova."

"It's not all right. I got enough troubles without you. Now get the hell out of here." This guy and Fanny should hit it off fine. I could feel myself getting hot under the collar. "O.K., if that's the way you want it," I said. "I thought I'd let you know I've got a client I'm investigating the murder for. The murder we're all mixed up in—including you."

He leaned back in his chair and started nervously snapping the fingers of his right hand. "So you managed to make it official. You're the noisiest damn man I've seen for quite a while, Scott."

For a guy about five-nine and a hundred and sixty pounds, he was a little too belligerent. A private detective, though, is still just a private citizen, and Genova didn't have to be nice to me. But he was becoming a

trifle too personal, and I was getting awfully fed up with most of the people I'd rubbed against in this case. It would have given me great pleasure to pin Zoe's murder on about six of them.

I said, "Fortunately—or unfortunately—that's the way I get paid for. And as long as Bondhelm is on the set—"

"Bondhelm?" He came up out of his chair as if he had springs in his bottom. "Bondhelm! You're working for Bondhelm? Why, that sonofabitch! So help me, if you so much as give us five seconds of trouble on this picture I'll have the law on you. Why, you sonofabitch, you. You son—!"

That was as far as he got. He was wearing a blue tie, and I shot out my left hand, grabbed the tie, and yanked him toward me. His thighs hit the edge of the desk and he folded over on top of it with his face about a foot from its top. I jerked up on the tie and stuck my face down a couple of inches from his and sprayed words in his face.

"Give this a good listen, Genova. You can object all you want to about my nosing around. You can even get a little tiresome. But keep a civil tongue in your head or I'll twist you around till you've got your feet in your mouth. You got that?" I shoved him back into his chair.

He landed heavily and sat there for a moment without moving. Then his hands came up and gripped the chair arms till the knuckles showed white. He made a couple of noises that weren't words, just angry choking sounds.

It seemed like a good time for it, so I leaned on his desk and said, "You know, a man who gets as mad as you are right now could go mad enough even to strangle a woman. I'll be back."

Oddly enough, instead of getting worse and maybe falling down on the floor and biting his tongue, he got better. Slowly. He stopped wiggling his lips, finally took his hands from the chair arms, and relaxed.

Normal color flowed back into his face and he said slowly, his poise recovered now, "You take an unfair advantage of me, Mr. Scott. I imagine you do push-ups."

That was the most human thing I'd ever heard him say. I took a deep breath. "O.K., Genova. I do apologize. But I think that works both ways."

He looked at me then. "Yes. Well, I'm sorry for what I said, Mr. Scott." Pretty soon we were going to kiss each other. He went on, "It was your mention of Bondhelm. Perhaps you don't understand, but he'd do almost anything to—to sabotage production. Perhaps you don't understand."

"I know what the score is. But I won't do any man's dirty work, Genova. You can depend on that. My concern, and my only concern, is who murdered Miss Townsend." I waited a minute, then added, "If you don't want to talk to me, you don't have to. But it'll look funny if you don't."

His face hardened. "Don't threaten me, Mr. Scott. I will absolutely not stand for threats."

This Genova was actually a pretty hard boy. It occurred to me that he'd be able to take shots at me. Or hire somebody to do it for him. I was still stabbing in the dark, but I said, "Incidentally, Genova, you wouldn't have had a little man following me around this morning, would you?"

He blinked at me and looked puzzled. "Little man? What do you mean?"

"Skip it. You mind a couple of questions?" He thought about it. "Not if you make it fast. I am actually extremely busy."

I climbed into a chair at the side of the desk—a good five feet from his slightly crumpled tie. "All right, here it is, fast," I said. "Thursday night you were at Raul's. Along with Raul, Swallow, King, Helen, Dot, and

maybe a couple of others. I know Zoe left to go to Raul's about eight that night. What can you give me including where you were then? Also, what's this about Zoe being out to give Swallow trouble—and where was he during the evening?"

"That's all?"

"That's it; at least for now."

"All right." He swung his chair around to face me. "I know absolutely nothing about any trouble between Zoe and Oscar, or anything else about her except that she was his secretary. We discussed business till seven-thirty or eight o'clock, at which time I left. The party was growing more . . . lively then. However, I was assured the group would soon break up, inasmuch as we were shooting the next day. Swallow, though, had been drinking all evening, and apparently even before he came to Raul's. He quietly went to sleep and I believe he was on the floor when I left. People just stepped over him."

At another time that might have been an amusing picture. Particularly of the immaculate Swallow. I said, "You know, naturally, that I'm trying to find out who at the party had opportunity to kill Zoe. Would you say that lets Swallow out?"

"I'd say no such thing. All I know is what I've told you."

"O.K. Now, on the opportunity angle—how about you, Genova?"

He smiled. "Obviously I had no opportunity. I left before any of the others and was home long before any violence that might have occurred."

"How does that follow? I'm just guessing, but couldn't you have met Zoe? While the others were inside?"

He squinted at me. "Of course not. I left the grounds. Why, I didn't even see the girl." He frowned. "Why, good Lord, you can't possibly think. . ."

"I don't think anything in particular. I'm just asking around."

He swallowed, looking a bit strained. "It's odd to even suspect I had anything to do with it. I didn't even know the girl except as an employee." He swallowed again.

"Well, doesn't that cover it?"

I got up. "O.K. Thanks for your time."

"All right," he said. "I hope you don't bother me again."

This was more like the old Genova. "So do I," I told him.

As I started to leave he added, "Scott, you mentioned opportunity. Doesn't there usually have to be motive also?"

He sure had me there. At least till I found out more about the Zoe-Swallow business. "It'll turn up," I said. He was pulling at one of his black eyebrows as I went out.

I headed back for Swallow's office. I wanted to know more about Sherry's suspicions, but I'd also begun to think that the writer's office might not be a healthy place for her since he'd overheard her accusing him. Kind of a funny thing, too, despite all the other attractive and even beautiful women on the fringes of this case, Sherry was getting to be more and more on my mind.

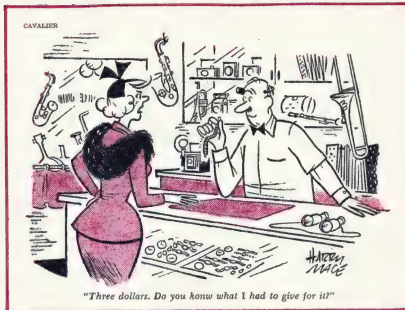
The studio here was a fairly busy place, and there was really no logical reason for worry to nag at my mind as I neared Swallow's office. But it did until I knocked and heard Sherry's smooth voice answer.

I poked my head inside and said, "Hello."

"Won't work this time," she said grinning. I went in. Swallow was visible through the open door to a farther room. I asked Sherry, "Any bruises?"

"I haven't looked. Not yet." She was smiling, and even as sweet and cute as she looked, it was almost a lead-pipe cinch that she had plenty of hell in her. With that incredible shape she couldn't have helped hearing about the differences between boys and girls.

I said, "I didn't mean to rush you." I



walked over and sat on the corner of her desk. "You know, I wish we were chatting under different circumstances, Sherry."

Her face softened immediately and I knew she was thinking of Zoe again. "Look," I said softly. "I didn't know Zoe, myself, but if you liked her she must have been O.K. The thing is to find out the who—and why."

She glanced toward the open door of Swallow's office, then back at me. "I suppose so."

"Look," I said. "I'd like to see some of the people on the set. Why don't you and I have a look. You can show me the way."

She smiled that impish smile. "O.K. Just a minute." She got up and walked to Swallow's door. "Oscar, we're going over to the set. All right?"

"We? Who's we? Oh, Scott. Hello again. Fine. I'll go with you, if you don't mind."

I did mind a bit, but he was already coming into the outer office. We went out and down the hall, Sherry in the middle. She grabbed my arm and lunged on, friendly as a pup. I wanted to put my arm around her and squeeze her. I couldn't help contrasting Sherry with Helen. Maybe Helen had a trifle more polish, more smooth glamour, but this Sherry had enough for me.

We went from the Administration Building across the lot to Sound Stage 3. The red light was burning over the entrance, which meant that shooting was going on, so we chatted and made small talk till the light winked out, then the three of us went inside. I'd heard someone say they were shooting the temple scenes, and I could see the set about fifty feet from the door we'd come through, past a whole mess of people, most of them standing quietly. Overhead were a number of scaffolds and catwalk affairs, some with lights and other equipment not presently in use on them, and around the set itself was what looked to me like a million dollars' worth of machinery: cameras, mikes, booms, dollies and trucks, reflectors.

We picked our way over some electrical cable on the floor and walked up to within a few feet of the set. I saw Raul talking to another man and I asked Sherry, "What's going on now? O.K. if I see Raul?"

"Might be better to wait, Shell. He's talking to Frazier, the director of photography. Fixing up the camera angle and lighting for this scene, I imagine. You mind waiting?"

"Not with you. Besides"—I nodded toward the set—"this is kind of a kick."

I watched the activity while Sherry kept me informed about what was going on. Finally Raul went over to a little canvas chair with "Director" painted on its back and sat down. Frazier and the head electrician finished lighting the set, then somebody yelled, "First team!" and Helen walked out of a little knot of people and up to a small altar in the center of the set. She leaned back against it and waited.

She was wearing a brown thing that looked like tanned skin—animal skin—hanging in jagged shreds down her smooth thighs and barely covering her breasts. Very nice it was maybe I'd ride a couple of breakers and at least come in to say hello. Then I spotted King just off the set on the edge of light. He had on shorts of the usual leopard skin and a necklace of polished claws was around his neck, light glinting from them when he moved. He looked approximately as big as Gargantua. Well, I wanted to talk to Gargantua about an item in the a.m. Crier: I had a pretty damn good idea who'd given Fanny her "scoop."

I'd have to wait until this scene was over, though, so I watched as the last touches were given the lighting. Then Raul turned and said something to the assistant director near him and the assistant shouted, "Roll 'em!"

A bell rang somewhere, and after a few seconds the man on the mike boom called, "Speed!" and some guy stepped up in front of the camera lens with one of those little two-stick hinged affairs that said, "Scene 121," and clapped the sticks together. Raul yelled, "Action!" It seemed that it took a lot of yelling to get this thing started.

But it appeared to be on its way now, and I noticed that King had climbed up on a raised platform out of camera range and was squatting on his haunches. Helen stood in front of the altar, and as the electrically operated cameras preserved it all she made a mess of mystic signs and sank to her knees. Some more scantily clad savages, female, came in and made signs and went out. Helen fiddled around up there for half a minute more, then King let out a wild yowl that nearly scared the pants off me and leaped down beside the altar. Helen turned, screamed—I didn't blame her a bit; I'd have

screamed, too—and fought briefly with King as he grabbed at her. Then suddenly she fainted and King picked her up with remarkable ease and slung her over his shoulder.

"Cut!" That was Raul yelling again. A bell rang a couple times and noise bubbled up around us. I turned to Sherry. "Seems like nice work."

She laughed. "Doesn't it? They're finishing up here today. The rest of the shooting is on location out of town. Starting tomorrow."

I saw King walk over and say something to Raul. "Excuse me a minute, Sherry. Be back in a shake."

I walked up to Raul, sitting in his canvas chair. He spotted me as I came up and gave me a big grin. King didn't.

"Hello, Shell," Raul said. "You looking for a job?"

"Not exactly. How's it going?"

He bobbed his head. "Going good. We'll finish up O.K. Everything under control. What's with you? How'd you get in here?"

"I'm back at work."

"The obvious thing?"

"Yeah." King was looking at me, which is to say he was glaring at me, so I said hello. He didn't answer.

"Say, King," I said. "You see Fanny Hillman's column this morning?"

"I saw it, crumb."

I could feel that old, familiar tightness starting to squeeze my stomach muscles. I said, "For a grown man, you've got a damn short memory."

"My memory's fine. I remember how funny you looked on your butt."

"About that column in the *Crier* this morning," I said quietly. "Any idea how that obvious error got into so conservative a rag?"

"Now, how would I know, Scott? You looking for trouble?" He came around Raul's chair and stepped up in front of me. I had given this guy a short spell of blankness just the night before, but he wasn't the least bit frightened of me. I wasn't exactly sure whether he frightened me or not. Looking at him, I was positive that he was holding his breath, and right then he took a deep breath. His stomach looked like a flesh-covered washboard, and I wondered if it would go ping! if I slapped it. I didn't slap it.

"No," I said, "not exactly. I mean I'm not looking for trouble. But I'm curious about that item. Among other things."

I suddenly noticed how quiet it had become. My voice was abnormally loud because I'd been trying to talk over the buzz of conversation and sound of people moving around. Some men were still working on the set, moving the altar now. I glanced around. Everybody near us was looking our way, standing motionless as if expecting fireworks.

King was about six inches from me and now he said, "I'm gonna tell you something, Scott. I'm gonna break your damn neck."

That was all he said. Somehow I'd expected more. Then he put a large hand on my chest and shoved me.

That's all it takes. Because of some peculiar quirk in me, that is the easiest way in the world for anybody to bring out my worst side. I could feel my cheeks get hot and it was almost as if I could hear the blood rushing through my brain. I balled up my fists and, at the same instant, realized what I'd been about to pull.

I didn't know for sure that I could take King in a brawl, though after last night I thought the odds were in my favor. But even if he threw me to the floor and jumped up and down on me I couldn't afford to clobber him. If I so much as gave him a fat lip, all hell would break loose: Bruta, the star of the show, wouldn't be able to emote in front of the cameras and Bondheim would practically die of happiness. This was exactly what Bondheim had hinted at last night: "If, by any accident, you should interrupt shoot-

ing..." Involuntarily I shuddered, and my fists peeped open.

King had his head stuck forward on his trunklike neck and his ludicrous chin was pushed forward, making a beautiful target somewhat like a ledge of granite. Everybody was still looking at us, waiting for the fearless Shell Scott to tear King limb from limb, or vice versa. And here I stood wondering what the hell I'd had it.

"King," I said, and stopped. I didn't know what I could say. I tried again. "I told you once before, let's not be silly. Haven't you got anything better to do?"

He grinned wider. He figured he had me crawling now. "Scott," he said, "let's settle this once and for all. I said I was gonna break your neck. Didn't you hear me good?"

"I heard you." I could hardly get the words out. I was so mad. I could feel the sweat starting to come out on my face, and my hands were again squeezed into fists.

We stood facing each other, staring into each other's eyes from about six inches apart, and finally after what seemed like an hour King said, "Well, well."

He took another breath, let it out, then turned his back on me and swaggered away.

Raul started barking orders to his crew and I just stood there behind his chair for a few seconds, feeling a little sick inside and not wanting to look at anybody. Then I turned and walked back to Sherry. She looked curiously at me. I might have imagined it, but I thought she looked disappointed. In me.

"What was all that, Shell?"

"King wanted to break my neck. Didn't you hear him?" My voice still wasn't under control.

"I heard him, Shell. You sound funny."

"I feel funny. King and I had a beef last night, after you left. Guess he wants more."

He didn't say anything else, but he did. I was standing in semidarkness about thirty feet behind where Raul sat, the two of us by ourselves now. Swallow had wandered off somewhere.

Raul shouted, "Get this one and we knock off for lunch." Things quieted down and I could see Helen and two other women standing in front of the cameras.

As I watched, my breathing went back to normal and the dryness eased out of my throat. I'd had just about enough, I was thinking. First a guy shooting at me, and now this mess with King. The thought of that bullet hole in the side of the Cad started the tenseness pulling slightly between my shoulder blades again and I looked around the spot where we stood, looked into the grayness and the shadow, at the unused equipment looming darkly in the gloom. Nothing moved, and I realized that I had actually been looking for something moving near us. I shrugged. I was getting too jittery. It was the dimness in here, the lack of reality and the shadows.

Finally Raul called, "Action!" again and the scene got started. I watched for a minute, then thought I heard something overhead. It seemed a little unlikely, but in the quiet as the take proceeded I had thought some kind of noise had come from above us. I glanced at Sherry, but she was intent on the action before the cameras. I looked up.

There was one of those catwalks overhead, almost hidden in the darkness high above us, and squarely above Sherry and me there was a heavier blob of shadow. For one queer moment I remembered that darker shadow I'd seen as I swam through the water of Raul's pool, and then that heavy blob above us moved.

I imagined my eyes at the movement, hardly believing what I was seeing, and just as I decided that the shadowy outline must be that of one of the huge arc lights, it toppled from the catwalk and plummeted toward us.

CHAPTER EIGHT

For a fractional part of a second, only a breath of time, I stared at the bulky metal hung on the edge of the catwalk and started to fall. Then I yelled, "Look out!" and leaped to my right, my hands outstretched as I crashed into Sherry and sent her sprawling forward.

Raul shouted something, but I didn't hear what it was and I was only barely conscious of the other shouts and cries, for even as the light crashed behind me I was leaping for a spotlight. I swung it around and up toward the ceiling.

The light fell on the narrow catwalk and I saw a man racing along it toward the far wall. I trained the strong beam of light on him and saw his hand go up before his eyes, trying to block out the blinding glare. Then he stumbled and yelled hoarsely as one foot slipped over the edge of the catwalk. For a moment he hung there, with his arms waving frantically, then fell, screaming. His body dropped through the beam of light and into the darkness beneath it, then thudded sickeningly against the floor.

I felt a little sick. I pulled the beam of light down till it splashed over the crumpled body several feet from me. Several of the cast and technicians were moving either toward me or the man on the floor, and I left the spotlight trained across the room on the unmoving figure there, then walked toward it. I heard voices crying, "What happened?" "What the hell's going on?" and a woman's voice repeating, "He fell! I saw him fall!" as I walked past those who were already in front of me. Two men were standing between the man on the floor and me, and as I stepped around them somebody found a switch and lights brightened this whole area of the sound stage.

There was no doubt that the man was dead; his neck was twisted and bent at an impossible, almost comic, angle. His horn-rimmed spectacles lay a few inches from his nose, one lens shattered, the jagged pieces of glass reflecting the light that poured over him. The little bald spot had eaten its way outward as far as it ever would. Apparently I hadn't lost the little man in the green Chevy this morning. I'd lost him now.

Raul pushed through the gathering crowd and said, "For God's sake, what happened?" I turned and looked at him. I was so jittery that for a moment I even searched Raul's face to see if I could read any guilt or insincerity there. Then I realized I was being silly and answered him, "I don't think I know exactly, Raul." I pointed to the catwalk above us. "What kind of screw setup is that? Where does that thing go?"

"Huh!" He followed my pointing finger. "Oh, that? Goes over to the wall. Runs into another one over there, too." He pointed to another catwalk that led off at right angles from the one above us. "Why, what's that got to do with—with this mess?"

"The little guy there tried to drop a light on my head. I guess he meant to take off in the confusion. Who is he, anyway?"

Raul looked at the little man and swallowed. "Think his name's Henson. He's a grip. You put the spot on him?"

"Uh-huh. That wasn't in the script. I wasn't supposed to be able to jump around." Suddenly I thought of Sherry. I swung around and headed back to where I'd left her sprawled on the floor, then I saw her leaning against a wooden beam.

"You all right, honey?"

"I guess so." She managed a weak smile. "Somebody took the brakes, but I think that's all." She paused and then added, "Thanks to you. What happened, anyway?"

I didn't get to answer her.

A door at the side of the room crashed

open and Genova descended upon us like a thin Napoleon. His booming voice preceded him. "What's the matter? What's the matter? What happened? What happened? Raul!"

Raul was kneeling by the body. "Here, L. G.," he said, and Genova wheeled and walked up beside him. He spotted the dead man and stood looking down at him, speechless for a few seconds, then he said rapidly, "What's this? Who is this man?"

I gave Sherry's arm a squeeze and walked over to the center of the activity. "He's dead, Genova," I said. "He was up—"

Genova snapped his head around at the sound of my voice and his bushy eyebrows crawled up his forehead like black snails. "You!" he roared. "You! You did it! You're trying to ruin me! I have—"

It was my turn to interrupt. "Shut up a minute, Genova. Get it through your head that the guy's dead. Come over here."

I spoke so roughly and sharply that my voice cut through the confusion and Genova followed me to the broken light on the floor. "Take a fat look at that," I said. "The dead guy pushed it off the catwalk there—I pointed and Genova looked up and then back at my face—and I was just lucky enough to hear him. I swung a spot on him and he fell. Get it through your head, Genova—he was trying to kill me."

It was relatively quiet now. Genova stared at me for a moment, his mouth sagging a little. He looked dazed. Finally he said plaintively, "Do you know what this is costing me? Three thousand dollars. Every hour it costs me three thousand dollars." His voice got stronger; this was something of which he was positive. "I'll be ruined," he said loudly. "You're trying to ruin me!" He turned and looked at all the others standing a few feet away and shouted, "He's working for Bondhelm! Ask him! Ask him!"

Raul walked forward. "Look, L. G.," he said quietly. "I'm not sure what happened here, myself, but I don't see how it could have been Shell's doing."

I said, "Genova, listen to me a minute. I've told you what happened. I sure as hell didn't plan it. The person responsible is that little guy on the floor, or somebody he was doing his dirty work for."

It got as quiet as the inside of a coffin. I heard the rustle of cloth as a woman moved slightly, and change jingled faintly as Raul took his hand from his trousers pocket. I said, "This is for the police now."

Genova mumbled something softly and looked pained, and spurts of conversation shot up again. Suddenly I remembered one face I hadn't seen.

"Where's Swallow?" I asked abruptly. "Right here, old boy. You want me?"

He was leaning idly against a table on my right and slightly behind me, smoking a long cigarette. "No," I said. "Just curious." He stared back at me as blankly as the sound of sirens penetrated into the sound stage from the open door; somebody had already phoned the police.

I walked over and stood beside Sherry. The noise behind me swelled up almost to normal and she said quietly, "Thanks, Shell. For pushing me out of the way."

I grinned down at her. "To tell you the truth, honey, I'm not positive whether I pushed you out of the way or just banged into you while I was running hell."

She smiled. "I doesn't make any difference. Shell, are you working for Bondhelm?"

I groaned inwardly. I'd hoped Sherry, at least, wouldn't share Genova's low opinion of me. But she didn't look angry or contemptuous. There was a quite different expression on her face.

I said, "I'm working for Bondhelm, it's true. But only to find out who killed Zoe. Maybe he's got some not very nice reasons for

wanting me nosing around, but they're not my reasons. He's just paying my way." I swallowed, realizing it actually did make a difference to me, and added, "I'd kind of hoped you'd take that for granted."

She smiled sweetly up at me. "I do, silly. And you were calling me honey." She put both her arms around my right arm and squeezed it gently to her. Then she let go and said mischievously, "Why don't you poke that old King, anyway?"

I was still trying to think of something to say when the siren slowed and stopped outside. Right after that the two sergeants who had conducted the interrogations with Captain Nelson at Raul's place came in.

It was two o'clock before I'd gone through my story enough times, including the episode of the bullet hole in my Cadillac, and could leave. Before I took off I talked with Sherry on the set and arranged to meet her that night. She'd be having dinner at Joseph's on Cypress Avenue, she said, but after that she'd be at her apartment, at least by eight p.m. There was no chance to talk much more to her in all the hubbub and confusion, so I told her I'd see her at eight and left. On my way out I saw Helen, who made a face at me and tossed her head. It seemed I was developing a real talent for getting people and at me, I didn't care too much right now, though; I could still feel the warmth of Sherry against my arm.

CHAPTER NINE

I drove downtown to City Hall, took the elevator up to the Temple Street floor, and walked down the long hall to Room 42: Homicide, Captain Phil Samson looked up from his desk in the inner office.

"Hi, Shell. At it again?"

"Yeah. I've been talking to so many high-powered characters I figured it was time I relaxed with a pooped-out cop. Got to slow down once in a while."

"Fah!" He reached for one of his odious black cigars, stuck it between his strong teeth, and scowled at me. Sam and I have been scowling and growling at each other for years, but there's damn little we wouldn't do for each other. His age shows in his gray hair but not in the size or set of his big jaw. And I'll say this for Sam: In a world where honesty is still the greatest and rarest virtue, he's an honest man. He'd have had my respect for that even if I hadn't liked the old warrior.

He said gruffly, "Was killed by John Smith. Now hurry and get your name in the papers and we'll pick him up."

I grinned at him. "I already got my name in the papers. Seriously, you getting anywhere?"

He shook his head. "Not much yet—but I understand we're getting quite a lot on you." He shifted the cigar, clamped his teeth into it. "Give us time. You're talking about the Townsend one, I suppose."

"Uh-huh. I was there; guess you know that." He nodded, and I spent the next five minutes briefing him on the story from last night to now and getting odds and ends from him. After I'd told him about the latest episode I said, "It comes out the little guy was a grip. Worked around the sets—named Henson, James Henson. I know damned well he was only a hired man paid to fix my wagon, but naturally he's not talking. Two to one he was the sharpshooter who missed me, too."

Sam frowned. "I wonder how long you'll last," he said, looking at me curiously. Then he shrugged. "Well, I'll get the reports from the Hollywood boys, but this is the first I've thought much about Bondhelm. We'll see about him."

"Think he could be mixed in the murder?" "You know better than that, Shell. Maybe

her Aunt Mary killed her. It's a little too soon to figure."

"Yeah." We shot the breeze a while longer, then I got from him the names and addresses of everybody who'd been in the Thursday-night group and also at the Sunday-afternoon party. The names were the same except that Archer Block, the other writer, had been present on Thursday, and two of the girls, Susan and Peggy, hadn't been around there. That left everybody I was interested in.

Sam lit a cigar, and smoke—I'd swear it was green smoke—spewed out of his mouth. It was time I left. "Sure easy for you to get rid of me, I told him. You got anything for free?"

He blew smoke at me. "Nope." He paused. "On second thought, there's one thing you might think about. The girl was pregnant."

"Zoe? The dead one?"

"That's right. Don't know who yet." I thought about it. I remembered a lot of things, and maybe now I knew why Swallow had said, "She's killed herself." "Sam," I said, "I'll give you odds. Swallow—Oscar the fancy Swallow. The writer man."

"Oh?" The big jaw wiggled on his cigar. "We'll find out."

He nodded, and as I went out he told me to watch myself. He didn't have to tell me; I had a hunch that if I didn't look alive I'd be dead.

Back in the Cad I sat thinking for a minute or two, then pointed the buggy's nose toward the Hollywood Freeway. Little Dot English wasn't working today, her stint in "Jungle Girl" having been finished some days back, and she might have some things to tell me. For all I knew, she might have some things to show me.

She was in a suite in the ritzy Francis Hotel. Not room service. Dot was doing all right. I rang and heard footsteps come toward the door, then Dot's tousled blonde head poked out and she said, "Oh, hello, Mr.—Mr. Shell?"

"Just Shell, O.K. if I come in?"

"Well, I'm not exactly dressed. . . ." She thought about that a minute and then laughed fit to kill. It was a bit funny. My most vivid memory of Dot was when she was bouncing on the springboard.

"Oh, hell, come on in," she said.

I went in. She wasn't "exactly dressed," but she was covered up well enough. Apparently she'd been sleeping late, and she had on pajamas of white silk. Thin pajamas.

It was a neat little sitting room we were in, with the bedroom and rumpled bed visible through an open door on my left. The furnishings looked expensive. She sat down on a couch against the wall and patted the cushion beside her while she turned the knob on a table radio beside the couch.

"Sit down, Shell," she said. "What brings you up to see me?" She smiled as if she had a pretty good idea. I didn't quite tell her it was the wrong idea; not right at first.

I sat down beside her and said, "It's really about Miss Townsend's murder. I thought maybe you could help me clear up some tag ends."

"Tag ends. It sounds like a game."

I laughed with her a while, then I said, "No, no game. I'm serious. Like your help."

She looked puzzled at that, but she said, "Sure, I'll help if I can." Then she smiled again. "How did you know I was here?"

"I was just out at the studio. They said you'd probably be home, since you got eaten up by a lion in an early scene."

She laughed some more. "He didn't eat me up, really. He was just a toothless old woman. Kind of gummed me a little."

I grinned at her, showing my teeth. I wasn't learning much good Zoe, maybe, but I was getting a pretty good line on Dot. The radio had warmed up by now and she

reached over with what might have been a practiced gesture—and if it had been practiced in time well spent because it did things to the top of her pajamas, and me—and turned the volume down low.

It seemed like time I got around to asking questions, but I didn't know quite how to start. In any murder investigation, when you have to talk to a lot of people involved, there's always the possibility—no matter how slight—that the very one you're talking to might be a killer or accomplice, so you have to keep that in mind. But at the same time you don't want to embarrass or annoy the hell out of nice people who happened to get caught in the fringes. Especially nice people like Dot.

Finally I said, "It looks like somebody at Raul's Thursday night . . . did it. She was choked to death. Do you know when Zoe showed up?"

She shook her head. "No. I guess nobody knows. Nobody saw her at all. Gee, it's sure funny."

"It's it. Uh, when did Genova leave?"

"I'm not sure, exactly. I was"—she giggled a small giggle—"I was outside with Raul. I guess it was around eight, or a little after."

"You were with Raul outside?" She nodded. That would have been very near the time Zoe was heading for the house. She must have arrived around eight or a little later, from what information I'd gathered.

"What were you, I stopped. I'd started to ask what she and Raul had been doing, then realized it might not be the most gallant question I could think of."

She was ahead of me. "Oh, we weren't doing anything. I mean, not really—you know." She looked at me with a small smile on her lips. Her eyes were green, I noticed, and her skin was almost as smooth and white as the pajamas. Little Snow White. "We were just sitting out back in the swing."

That was on the opposite side of the house from both the pool and the barbecue pit. I asked, "Around eight, huh? Did—that is, was Raul with you all the time?"

"Uh-huh. Except when he went for a couple drinks."

"When was that, Dot?"

She hunched her shoulders and dropped them. "I dunno. Not for sure. A little while before we went inside. I remember we went inside about half past. Past eight."

"How long was Raul gone, Dot?"

"Only a couple of minutes. Just a little bit, time to mix two drinks." She blinked at me. "That's silly, anyway. Shell. Raul wouldn't hurt anyone."

"Yeah, I know that. Just asking questions. You're sure he wasn't gone more than two minutes?"

"Two or three, that's the most." She grinned. "He was in a hurry to get back."

I returned her grin. "I'll bet he was, Dot. One more thing. Where were Swallow and King? And Helen?"

"Douglas and Helen were together all the time. Swallow passed out, the fool. Raul and I rolled him over to the wall before we went back."

By George, she was right up against me now. I cleared my throat. "You know much about Swallow, Dot? I mean the kind of guy he is, where he came from, and so on."

"I just know him to speak to. Pretty good-looking fellow. Good writer, too—I read his 'book. You read it?"

"The Savage Christian?"

"Uh-huh." Her breath caressed my cheek.

"No. Good, huh? What was it about?"

"Well . . . why . . . about life. Yes, about true life. I guess, I couldn't say exactly, but it sure was good, Shell?"

"Yeah?"

"Let's not talk about them, or about any murder, Shell. Is that really why you came to see me?"

Her breath was warm on my neck as she moved her lips closer to me.

Just to get all the business out of the way, I said, "Let's say that's part of the reason, Dot. After all, a detective is supposed to ask people questions. Part of the time, at least. But, uh, I think I've finished."

"A what?" she asked me.

"What do you mean, a what?"

"A what. What did you say you were?"

"A detective. You know, a private detective. You do know . . . didn't you know that?"

"A detective? A detective? Aren't you even an assistant director?"

The horrible truth seeped in through one of the cracks in my brain. This little tomato wasn't after my sun-browned body, not a bit of it. I wondered what had ever made me suppose she was. Helen and I had fallen into a pretty intimate relationship because of the circumstances under which we'd met, and the almost inevitable events that had followed, and Sherry and I had seemed to get along like bourbon and water. But that was no reason for me to suppose that all females of the opposite sex were going to start swooning as soon as I patrolled them.

Dot was still frowning at me, looking betrayed. I said, "Frankly, I thought you knew what I was. I'm a private investigator, office on Broadway downtown. At your service."

"Well!" She thought about that for a while. "Aren't you anything at Genova? Or anywhere?"

"That's a peculiar way to put it, Dot. I'm just what I said. But, no, I'm not any part of the movie industry. Dot? Hello?"

Her lip twitched slightly and she reached over and turned the radio up a little louder. While she was at it, I took a good look while I had the chance. After about a minute of rather deadly conversation I got up.

"Well, Dot, thanks very much for your time. And the help. I, uh, guess I'd better get back to work."

She got up and smiled, pleasantly enough, but walked to the door and opened it. She said, from habit, I guess, "I had a lovely time. Good night."

I almost had to laugh. Damn her, she was sure a cute little doll, no matter what. I walked by her into the hall, and right then I had a brilliant idea.

I turned around. "Say," I said. "I just remembered. I am part of the industry after all. I've got some stock in 'Jungle Girl.'"

"Oh?" She looked a little more pleasant. "How much?"

I considered that one. "Not much, I guess. Not enough." I walked down the hall as Dot shut the door quietly behind me.

CHAPTER TEN

I spent the afternoon talking to Jerri, the girl who had been at Raul's both Thursday and Sunday and who knew from nothing, stoking up on food, and finding out all I could about the various persons in the case from newspaper files, friends, and contacts I've worked up in town. I learned very little.

Swallow had been in town about a year and a half, brought here after "The Savage Christian" had stirred up some comment, and he'd worked for Genova on his previous movie, "Jungle Woman," and on "Jungle Girl." Apparently he hadn't done any other writing. Genova himself had produced only the two movies, and I was up on the story of those. Before succumbing to the lure of Hollywood he'd been vice-president of a trucking company—and boss of some pretty tough characters, from what I gathered. Then he'd worked a couple of years for one of the big studios. The more I learned of Genova, the more capable of murder he seemed. The only trouble was that murder, except for the professional kill, is committed by some of the

most unlikely people imaginable. Zoe's murder had been no pro job, and it had been pulled off in a hurry when sudden, and brief, opportunity was offered.

King, I learned, had been playing in B movies almost all of his adult life—that is, if he could even now be considered an adult. With the story of the Wild Party Murder on the front pages, it didn't look likely that King would stand a chance in his child-custody battle. I couldn't be sorry. It appeared that his wife had left him, claiming she was tired of his "Me Brota; who you?" conversation. I believed it.

I called Bondhelm and reported that I was still alive and working, then worked my way through a prime-rib dinner. From there, after checking the address I'd got from Samson, I paid a call on screen writer Archer Block, the other writer on "Jungle Girl."

He was a medium-sized guy, husky, with curly black hair, and a half-empty highball glass in his hand. I introduced myself and showed him my credentials, and two minutes later we were seated in his front room—both of us with full glasses. He was a pleasant character, relaxed and willing to talk, but there seemed to be nothing he could tell me that was any help.

After a few minutes he answered one of my questions by saying, "I just had that one job with Genova. I'm presently between engagements, as they say." He grinned. "Mainly all I did was write behind Swallow. Only reason I went there Thursday night was to help with the changes Genova wanted. But I never saw him or heard of him. I left maybe thirty minutes after Genova."

"Good enough, Block. Thanks. What'd you mean about writing behind Swallow?"

He cocked an eyebrow. "I take it you don't know much about writing in Hollywood."

"I know from nothing."

He pulled at his drink, leaned back, and crossed his legs. "Let me tell you," he said. "It's my favorite subject. Well, next to one other, it's my favorite. Say the studio pays a fortune for a property—you know what a property is?"

"Not exactly."

"God, you're ignorant." He grinned. "Say they buy a book. Here's about how it goes, with a few of my slight exaggerations. First thing, you got to change the title. That's imperative. Then the studio gets about seven hundred writers to work on the book, make adaptations, put together a screen play. You take out some of the characters and put in others, see? If there's any sex in it you take it out and put in Love—or a pie in the face. You take out everything else and put other things in the script in place of it. Then you change the title again. The idea is to make the book completely unrecognizable. This is very important, because otherwise the film wouldn't stink. You following me?"

I returned his grin. "Vaguely."

"Well," he said, "that's just the beginning. You know something, Scott? The funniest script ever written in Hollywood can't be filmed: It's the Production Code. Only nobody laughs at it, unfortunately. You got to make all the scripts agreeable to the Breen office and the Code. Then you sort of wrap the script around the stars and cut holes in it so it fits. Then you put in any ideas the executive head of the studio has; same thing for the producer's ideas. He waggles his head back and forth and finished his drink. "You can see immediately how sensible this is. Well, on this 'Jungle Girl' cliff-hanger, I wrote behind Swallow—that is, I took his original and polished it up and added sparkling dialogue, put in some laughs. For this I get paid. And get drunk."

He fell silent for a moment and I said, "I take it you're not overjoyed with the system. But Swallow doesn't seem to mind."

"Why would he? He can't write his name. Believe me, on this stinker he can have all the credit. I don't even want any." He laughed, but there wasn't a lot of mirth in it. "Why ruin my glittering reputation? I got two credits. B pictures. Glittering. And Genova isn't going to win the Thalberg Award. Not this year. Sonofabitch." He lifted his glass, saw it was empty, lowered it again. Looking at the glass he said, "they don't pay you to write in Hollywood, anyway; they pay you for obedience."

He stopped talking and seemed to be all through, so I got up. "Thanks, Block. I'll buy you a drink sometime."

"I'll take it."

He walked to the door with me and told me good night pleasantly.

It was a little past seven p.m. by now, so from a phone booth I called Helen Marshall.

"Hello. Helen? This is Shell Scott."

"The late Shell Scott, I presume." She still wasn't hilarious.

"I hope you mean what I think you mean. I'm alive."

"That's not what I meant."

"I had a hunch it wasn't. Sorry I took so long with Bondhelm last night. Helen. I drove seventy all the way out and back."

"Well," she thawed a little, "that helps."

"Look, what say I come up and see you? I'd like to ask you some questions."

"Can you give me a hint?"

"Yeah. I want to ask about Zoe—and maybe some questions like 'How did you get so tanned?'"

"Well . . . you coming straight up? I mean, you won't get sidetracked on the way?"

"Be there in five minutes."

"Come on." She hung up.

I was there in six minutes. She lived in the Lexington, a small apartment hotel on Wilshire, and she opened the door right after I rang. She smiled at me and brushed her silvery hair with graceful fingers. "You made good time."

"Good Time Scott, that's me." I went inside, and she locked the door. She dropped the key down the front of her dress.

"Cagey," I said. "Does that mean we're still friends?"

She leaned against the door. "We'll see."

She was wearing a bright red skirt and a flowing white blouse with long sleeves and a Byron-type neckline that looked better on her than it ever did on Byron.

She walked away from the door and I followed her into a clean white and tile kitchenette. She took liquor and ice cubes from the refrigerator and got busy while I watched.

"Want me to do that, Helen?"

"No. Get your questions out of the way."

She poured several fingers of bourbon into a glass.

"Give me all you can on Thursday night. I know Zoe probably got to Raul's a little after eight. Who was there when and doing what, and so forth?"

"I was with King all evening after the business conference, till the party broke up."

"When was that?"

"Around ten. Not much later."

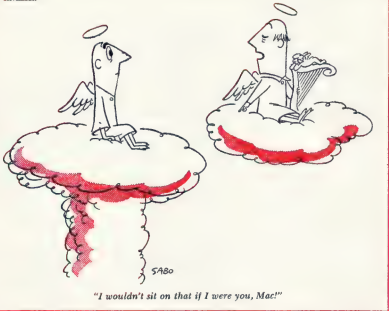
"And Swallow was conked out?"

"All the time. King had to slap him with a wet towel to wake him up."

"Could he have been faking? I mean by that, could he have sneaked out when nobody was looking, strangled Zoe, then come back in and plopped on the floor?" It sounded mighty silly even to me.

She shook her head. "He was passed out, all right; drinking like"—she smiled at me—"like one of your fish. Suppose he did come to and sneaked out; it would have been pretty much of a coincidence if he'd staggered out just at the same time Zoe showed up, wouldn't it? And King and I were in the same room with him most of the time."

CAVALIER



That sort of narrowed things down. Maybe. At least it did if Helen was telling me the truth, and I had no reason to suppose she wasn't.

"Come on," she said, and pulled me by the hand into the front room, where we sat down on the couch.

We'd stood in the kitchen for about ten minutes while she talked, and I'd found out about all I could concerning the case, so now when she said, "Any more questions?" I answered, "One. How did you get so tanned?"

She laughed. We were on the big couch, which was larger than most and had three or four pillow-like cushions scattered on it. We sat at opposite ends, half facing each other, with pillows behind our backs. "I'll tell you the truth," she said, smiling. "About half of it's from the sun; the rest is General Electric's sun lamp. I lie on the bed and nap for half an hour or so while I get brown."

That conjured up a lovely picture in my mind. I grinned at her. "Even in the privacy of your home you wear a swim suit, apparently. If memory serves me . . ."

"I do. I like to know how white I was."

We kept looking at each other and the conversation slowed down, faltered, and died.

She said finally, "Any more questions, Shell?"

"Not about the case."

"Not about the case."

"Not about the case."

Helen stood up deliberately, smoothed the red skirt over her hips then took two steps toward me and sat down on the couch at its side. She turned her back to me, stretched her legs out on the couch, and then lay back across my lap. I put my right arm behind her shoulders and she smiled up at me.

"There," she said softly. "Isn't this better?"

"Much. Even nicer than last night, Helen."

"I was pretty angry with you," she said. "I know it was business, but no woman likes a man to leave her alone in his apartment. Especially not on his bed."

"You'll never know how close I came to staying. I didn't think I'd be gone very long."

She smiled, eyes slanting, and whipped those long lashes at me a few times. "And you thought I'd be there when you got back. Like most men, you wanted to eat your cake and have it too."

"I guess. Another five seconds and I'd never have got out of the apartment, though."

You made an awfully pretty picture lying there. The way you were."

"Oh . . . yes," she said. Her tongue flicked over her lips. "I remember. I made myself more at home than I am even now." She hesitated and then added, "And that's foolish, isn't it?"

I didn't say anything. She had been lying in the crook of my arm, her legs stretched out full length, and now she eased off first one high-heeled shoe and then the other. She brushed them to the floor, then put her feet flat on the surface of the couch and pulled them upward along the couch with agonizing slowness, her knees rising and the red skirt sliding over them.

Then she stopped, moved one knee gently as I'd seen her move it the night before, and the skirt slithered over her knees and halfway down her thighs, stopping at the edge of her rolled stockings. The smooth flesh swelled from the top of each stocking and disappeared under the skirt's edge.

"Wasn't I like this?" she asked me. "But I wasn't wearing hose last night, was I? Shell, take them off for me."

My throat felt tight. As I reached across her body my coat sleeve slid up over my wrist watch and I noted, without even thinking about it, that it was nearly eight o'clock. Something about the time eight o'clock was nagging at a corner of my brain even as Helen sighed deeply and turned her body farther toward me. Then I remembered that it was at eight o'clock that I was to see Sherry.

It was a peculiar time for it, but I remembered how sweet she'd been right after she'd thanked me for pushing her out of the way when the light had fallen at the studio. And right then, too, out of some dark corner of my mind came a frightening thought. I had assumed all along, with no real proof, that the murder attempt had been for me. But it might just as easily have been directed at Sherry. I tried to force the thought out of my mind, told myself that it was obviously silly, but then I remembered other things: that Sherry was Zoe's roommate, that Zoe was dead, that Swallow had undoubtedly overheard Sherry saying he had murdered Zoe.

Helen moved against me and I brought my mind back from the frightening place it had been. I told myself I was exaggerating, imagining dangers that didn't exist. Helen's face was close to mine. "Shell . . ." she breathed

softly. Her lips were moist and parted, gleaming in the soft light. I bent close to her, my fingers light on her smooth skin, and pressed my lips to hers.

Finally she pulled her mouth from mine and let her head rest on my arm while she looked at me, her eyes narrowed and her lips a little tight. She looked savagely beautiful, and desirable as only a hot-blooded and passionate woman can look.

For long moments neither of us said anything. Finally I spoke, and I felt even better as I told her, "Honey, since I'm locked in, I'd better make a phone call. A short phone call," I added hastily. "Much as I hate to mention it."

Her brows furrowed slightly, then her forehead smoothed again. "Why?"

"I'm supposed to be somewhere"—I glanced at my watch—"right about now. I really should call and—put it off an hour or two, maybe."

She smiled faintly. "Put it off till tomorrow." Then she added, "Do you have to?"

"I'd feel better. Seriously. Mind?"

She sighed. "Well, if you must," She frowned again. "But remember what happened the last time you used a phone."

I grinned at her. "I'll remember."

The French phone was on a stand at the far end of the couch and Helen sighed again, pulled herself up on her knees, and scooted to the far end of the couch. I was reminded of that first Zerkon I'd watched filmed this morning and I came very close to forgetting about any calls. But Helen grabbed the phone, scooted back, and handed it to me.

I dialed the number Sherry had given me. While I waited for her to answer I watched Helen. She pursed her lips and blew me a kiss. I heard the receiver go up at the other end of the line. This was a lot better, I was thinking, than just letting Sherry sit in her house alone, wondering why the hell I hadn't at least let her know I wasn't coming. I got a picture in my mind of her sitting in a chair, tapping her foot, that small pout on her lips.

"Hello," I said. "This is Shell."

There wasn't any answer. "Hey, hello. Hello," I said again.

Very faintly, as if done with extreme care, I heard the phone replaced on the receiver. I pulled the phone away from my ear, looked at it, then pressed the receiver with my fingers and held it down for a moment.

"What's the matter, Shell? You look so strange."

I blinked at Helen. "I don't know. Somebody answered over there—I mean somebody picked up the phone and then put it back. But there wasn't anything said."

I dialed the number, and the fears I'd had a moment before growing in my mind, assuming almost terrifying proportions. The phone rang and kept ringing. Nobody answered, nobody lifted the receiver. I hung up, my mind spinning. I thought back to the conversation between Sherry and me at the studio when I'd arranged to see her at eight.

We could easily have been overheard by almost anybody near us. I couldn't remember who had been close by on the set. I dialed the operator and got the number of Joseph's Restaurant from information, and was rapidly put through to it.

When the phone was answered I said, "There's a Lola Sherrard who eats there a lot. She's either there now or left a little while ago. Do you know her?"

"Yes, sir. She left only a few minutes ago. Who is this?"

I hung up and turned to Helen. "Honey," I said, "I don't like to say this, but I've got to go. I've got to find out what's wrong."

She didn't get angry, or even object. But she said, "What is it, Shell? Sherry? Was that who you called?"

"Yeah. I was supposed to see her about the

case. And I don't know what's wrong." I got up. "But I'm afraid. . . ." I didn't finish it. I didn't want to finish it.

I turned around and started for the door, then Helen called to me. "Shell, wait."

When I turned around I saw her reach down the front of her blouse and pull out the key she'd playfully dropped there. She walked by me, unlocked the door, and opened it, then looked at me.

"Good-bye," she said listlessly. "Bye, honey." I went out. I trotted to the car and jumped in, started it and wheeled around in the street. I jammed the accelerator down, fear glowing inside me.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Sherry lived in a small house on Cypress Avenue about four miles from the Lexington, where Helen lived. I had the accelerator pushed against the floor boards most of the way. I let up on the throttle and slammed on the brakes to skid around corners, then jammed the accelerator down again on straight stretches. I was scared to death now. I was afraid something had happened to Sherry, or that it was happening now and I'd be too late. I didn't put into words what I was afraid of, even in my own mind, but I thought Zerkon was inside and distorted face was in front of my eyes all the way. I decided I'd care a lot if anything happened to Sherry.

Finally I could see her house and I skidded to a stop in front of it, leaped out of the car, and ran up the steps. I jumped to the door and tried to turn the knob. It was locked.

I banged on the door and listened. It was quiet, but I thought I heard something moving inside. No one came to the door. The feet in me had mounted almost to panic now and I walked back across the porch, then threw myself against the door, my shoulder splintering the panels. Once more the lock gave and I crashed into the room and fell to my knees. I was in the living room and there was no light on in here, but light spilled from an open door in back. I scrambled to my feet and ran toward it and inside.

Sherry lay face down on the floor, her left profile visible to me. I stopped and stared at her, not even thinking that somebody else might be in the room or somewhere in the house. I couldn't tell if she were breathing or not, and I was half afraid to touch her to find out. Finally I stepped forward, knelt beside her, and felt for her pulse. But even before I found it I could tell she was breathing. Color was still in her face and she breathed through her partly open mouth. Relief, a surprising surge of relief, flooded through me when I knew she was alive. I put my hand on her silky dark hair and felt a bump there close to her ear.

Only then, with the knowledge that Sherry had been sapped, did the logical sequence of thought enter my mind: Somebody else must have been here to sap her—and not long before. I looked around me, but we were alone; at least we were alone in this room. Sherry moaned softly—and then I heard something else. Something, or someone, had moved at the back of the house.

I got up, straining my ears, reached to my shoulder, and pulled the .38 from its holster. Straight ahead of me was an open window in the bedroom wall, the frilly curtains moving restlessly in a faint breeze, and even as I realized how perfectly visible I would be to anybody looking in from outside, I heard a sound out there again, near that open window.

I whirled around, jumped to the light switch on the wall, and brushed my hand over it to plunge the room into darkness. I stood still for a moment, listening, kept my

and tense, hearing nothing except the drum of my heart, then slipped out of the bedroom door and began feeling my way toward the rear of the house. As my eyes became more accustomed to the darkness I could see a faint patch of light through a room beyond me. I walked toward it, reached it. This was the back door, with faint moonlight filtering in through its window, and beyond was a small enclosed porch with what appeared to be a screen door leading outside from it. I turned the doorknob in front of me and pushed the door silently open, then stepped through.

A shiver raced up my spine and my stomach muscles jerked. I didn't like a bit of this. I was sure that somebody—almost certainly the one who had hit Sherry—was outside, or had been outside. Or could even now be no more than a few feet from me. I gripped the checked butt of the gun hard in my right hand and stepped softly across the wooden floor of the porch to the screen door, then placed my left hand against it and pushed gently. The hinges protested, squeaking with what seemed incredible loudness.

I stopped moving. If anyone was still out back, he knew where I was. I made up my mind, pushed the screen door outward as I drew back one step, waited an agonizing second as the hinges squealed in my ears, then lunged forward and slammed into the door as I sprinted outside.

Fire lanced at me from twenty feet on my right and the heavy boom of a large-caliber gun crashed against my eardrums. I dived for the dirt, twisting to land on my left shoulder as I snapped my gun up and squeezed off a shot toward another spit of flame that lanced at me, and my gun kicked in my hand, its sound blending with the roar of the heavier gun. I hit the ground rolling as I heard the whistle of air angrily kicking up a bullet. I kept rolling over and then awkwardly up on my knees, the gun still gripped in my right fist. I froze, holding my breath and listening.

I was in a bad spot and I knew it. I'd sprinted and rolled far enough away from the back of the house so that I was afraid to shoot again. I might send a bullet into the house, or into God knew what else or who else that was around here besides me and the other person behind a gun. But I couldn't sit still and do nothing while I was being shot at.

And that damned moonlight. It was faint, but there was still enough light to trace shadowy outlines in the darkness. I was in the shadow of something, the shading leaves of some kind of tree with the thick trunk barely distinguishable a few feet from me. I hoped to God it was a tree trunk. I couldn't hear anything in the night. I looked down at the ground near me for a rock or clod, something I could throw in the hope of drawing fire. There was nothing. As quietly as I could I swung out the cylinder of my gun, took out the empty shell, and pressed the cylinder back in. I flipped the empty shell away from me and it hit with a small rustling sound, then rolled a few feet. Nothing else happened.

In the silence I heard, from clear out toward the street, the sound of somebody running, feet slapping rapidly against the sidewalk, the noise getting fainter. I got my feet under me and sprinted around the side of the house. My eyes were accustomed enough to the darkness now so that I could see the outline of the wall, and I raced alongside it to the front and across the lawn as the sound of a car motor being cranked into life came from behind half a block down the street. I turned and ran on the sidewalk, and dimly, in the light of street lamps, I saw the car pull away from the curb and roar down the street away from me. I stopped and watched it go. It raced to the corner and turned right, head-

lights off all the way—and that settled it for me. Whoever it was had got away.

I thought of Sherry, still all alone in the darkened house. I turned and ran back to the open front door and inside. I hurried toward the bedroom, banging my shin against a chair; then I was at the bedroom door, feeling around for the light switch.

The light blazed on, almost blinding me with its sudden brilliance, and I saw Sherry. She was standing just inside the door, wearing a pink pull-over sweater and black skirt, and holding something in both hands high over her head. Her face was twisted and frightened, and she stepped toward me with her mouth open, swinging her weighted hands down toward me.

"Hey!" I yelled, and ducked. "Hello, whoops, watch it!"

The steps stuck just in time. Sherry had come very close to busting my skull with a bed lamp. She recognized me and wrenched the descending lamp away at the last moment. She bent over from the force of the blow, then straightened, holding the lamp in her hands. She looked at me for a moment, then let the lamp slip from her hands to the floor and stood facing me, her arms hanging limply at her sides. She just stared at me, half sobbing through her open mouth, and there was such a mixture of fright and surprise and almost tearful confusion on her sweet face that it brought a lump to my throat.

I stepped toward her and automatically put my arms around her, pulled her gently to me as she sobbed. "Oh, oh, golly, oh, golly," over and over.

"It's O.K., kid. Relax, honey," I told her. "Take it easy. No more trouble, Sherry."

She put her arms around my waist, buried her head against my shoulder and stood there holding tightly to me and trembling. It occurred to me in a moment of rare perception that it was worth getting shot at if this happened every time. But then Sherry raised her face, one shiny tear track running down each cheek, and looked at me with wide eyes. She bit her lip and stepped back from me, looking frightened again.

"What's the matter?" I said. "What's wrong?"

She was still recovering from shock, still bewildered, and she looked from my face to the gun still in my hand. I'd forgotten about it. God, she didn't think I was the one who'd sapped her.

"Whoa, there, honey. Relax." I put the gun back in its holster. "I'm on your side. Simmer down, sweetie."

Suddenly she sighed heavily, then walked to the bed and slumped on it. "What happened?" she asked me. "Shell, what happened?"

I walked over and pulled a chair up to a spot where I could sit facing her. Even shaken and bewildered, she looked like all the sirens. The pink sweater, I noticed, used up an amazing amount of material getting from her waist up to her neck. This Sherry had to be seen to be believed.

I brought my thoughts back in order and said, "I don't know for sure what happened, Sherry. Looks like somebody slammed you on the head. Why, I don't know yet. I called you around eight and thought something was funny, so I charged over. You were out cold and somebody was in back. I took a look around, but whoever it was got away."

She shivered, put a hand to the side of her head, and winced. Then she looked at me and gave me the faintest smile. "Somebody did—slam me on the head, Shell. When I came home there was a light on in the bedroom." She looked around her. "In here. I . . . I thought it was you."

I grinned at her. She was still shaky, and I figured she could use some light conversation. "Now, what the hell would I be doing

in your bedroom, Sherry? I know, but do you?"

She laughed softly and I said, "That's better. Tell me what happened."

"I wondered a little bit myself. Shell—about the light in here. But you said you'd come around eight. I called your name and walked in. I didn't see anybody. I don't even remember if I felt anything. That's just the last I remember." She frowned. "Until I woke up. I thought I heard guns or something."

"It was guns, all right. Just a minute." I walked to the bedroom window, shut it, and pulled the shade, then went and latched the screen and back doors. There wasn't much I could do about the busted door lock, but I turned on the living-room lights and propped a straight-backed chair under the knob. I went back to Sherry.

"All locked in," I said lightly. "And you'd better stay that way for a while. Those noises were shots. The character who sapped you was out back when I got here. We had a war, but it was a draw." I got serious. "Give a good listen to this, Sherry. Whoever it was meant business. There's not much doubt in my mind that the guy who sapped you is the one who killed Zoe. And there must be a good reason why he was here."

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She swallowed and sat quietly for a moment; then she said, "It was a man?"

"I suppose so, but I don't know. It seems likely. But right now, how's your head?"

She looked at me and blinked her blue eyes. "It hurts."

I took a look at the bump on her head, but the skin wasn't broken. I was all for calling a doctor, but after some argument during which she insisted she was O.K. and didn't want a doc, she won. We hunted up a couple of aspirins, and that seemed the best we could do. Then I said, "You got any liquid anesthetic in the house?"

"I've got gin," she said brightly. "Gin and orange juice."

"I stared at her, aghast. 'Gin,' I echoed. 'And orange juice. You sure you wouldn't rather have your head hurt?'"

She laughed. "It's not too bad—the head, I mean." She winced. "Not too good, either."

I spent the next five minutes mixing a couple of perfectly foul concoctions and chatting casually with Sherry while she got back to normal. Then I said, "O.K., let's get down to business."

She smiled impishly and said, "O.K."

I grinned at her. "Finish what you started to tell me at the studio—when Swallow walked in. And believe me, it's important."

"I believe you." She thought a minute, then went on. "Well, I told you Zoe hated Swallow, but that was just lately. They were fairly close for a while. Then—well, then he didn't treat her right."

I interrupted. "Sherry, the police told me Zoe was pregnant. That have anything to do with it?"

"Oh," she said. "Yes, it did. That was"—she looked at me—"Swallow. He didn't want anything to do with her after that. And Zoe naturally won't know."

The woman scorned. I was thinking, mad at the world and the focus on Swallow. Probably the greatest hurt was to her pride. I thought, but that's as deadly a hurt as any. Incongruously I thought of Helen.

I said, "So she was out to get even and

she found something she thought would do it. That brings us to Thursday night. You don't know what she was up to?"

"No. But what she said Swallow wouldn't be around town any more. She wouldn't have any look at his wife's face."

"She was still working for him, wasn't she? I mean as his secretary?"

"Uh-huh. Right up till the last. Sort of an armed truce till she . . . could get even with him. When she didn't show up Friday at the studio, I was worried. That's why I asked Geneva for her job till she showed up. I still thought she'd show up. But I wanted to be where I could see how he acted."

We talked some more and I learned only that both Zoe and Sherry had been doing stenographic work at the studio when they'd met, liked each other, and rented this house together. Sherry had been sipping on her orange-colored drink; I'd been afraid to try mine so far. I took a cautious sip. Wasn't bad. Tasted like orange juice. I'd put two jiggers of gin in the things, I remembered. Still tasted like orange juice.

"Well," I asked her, "now what? We're up to here and now. Why this business tonight? The guy must have been looking for something in the house. Probably in Zoe's things. Any idea what it would be?"

She shook her head. "I haven't any idea at all."

"Let's take a look around. You feel up to it?"

She upended her glass. "I feel surprisingly good, considering," she said. She beamed at me.

She also looked surprisingly good. She looked soft and lovely and warm. Not to mention that amazing development of hers. She stood up right in front of me and pulled the sweater down tight. I stared. When I remembered the way this case had started at Raul's, and what had followed—Helen, Fanny, the studio, Dot, Helen again—it was brought home forcibly to me that I was about as close to exploding from various kinds of frustration as a man can get.

"Say," I said. "Haven't you got an old bathrobe or something similar you could slip into? A thick, lumpy old bathrobe?"

She looked down at me. "A bathrobe? Why, yes, but—" Then she laughed again, mischievously. "Now, Shell, you stop it."

"To tell you the truth," I said, "that pink sweater makes conversation difficult."

She laughed merrily. "I can't help it," she said. "And I can't take it off."

I came very close to getting into a pleasant argument with her then and there. But she said, "Come on, Shell, let's look at Zoe's things."

I got up and said, "You lead the way, honey. You know where everything is."

She frowned. "I don't know what to look for."

"Frankly, neither do I. But apparently that guy was looking. He had to have some reason for sapping you." I added seriously, "If he'd wanted to kill you, Sherry, he'd have done it. It would be all over by now. So he must have been looking for something."

"Look," she said. "I hadn't paid any attention before."

She pointed to the dresser. The top two drawers were pulled out and the things inside had been disarranged, but none had been tossed onto the floor. We went through all the drawers, but found nothing that meant anything to us. Then Sherry led me into the front room and stopped in front of a bookcase.

"About half of these are Zoe's books," she said. "And those are her magazines and letters in the bottom."

We went through all the books, flipping the pages as if expecting a clue to leave out.

but nothing happened. I pulled the stack of magazines from the bottom shelf. The bunch of letters fell to the floor and I put them back on the shelf for the moment. "These magazines hers, Sherry?"

"Uh-huh."

There were a couple of old pulp magazines, science fiction of the old school with lurid and sensational covers. The rest were recent slicks. Sherry left for a moment and came back with two more orange drinks. I hauled off and had right at mine this time. Still tasted like orange juice.

"You put any gin in this?"

"You'd be surprised."

I wondered how this would mix with that handful of bourbon. Seemed to be mixing O.K. I was sitting on the floor in front of the bookcase and Sherry stood over me. I grinned up at her, then picked up *Fanta-Science*, one of the pulp magazines, which depicted on the cover an eight-legged monster chasing a busty, half-naked lovely over hill and dale.

"Ah," I said, "for the life of an artist. Uh, if I learn to paint, will you pose for me?" Her lips twitched slightly and she looked at the cover. "Like that?"

"Why not?"

She hesitated only a moment, then shrugged. "Why not?" she said. Her eyes sparkled and there was laughter in the turned-up corners of her mouth.

I cleared my throat, wondering what my next line was.

"She pointed. That thing's a grebble, I think."

"Doesn't look very agreeable."

She laughed happily. "I mean grebble." She spelled it. "The thing with the legs. Up on Mars or somewhere."

"Oh," I had at my drink again, then watched Sherry while she took a long swallow of hers. We flipped through the pulps and the slicks. No clues. I picked up the bundle of letters.

"What are these, Sherry?"

"Some of Zoe's, but I never looked at them before. I hadn't even thought about them since—since it happened."

I examined the top one. In the upper left-hand corner it said simply, "Swallow," with a local address. "I think we'd better look at them now," I said.

There were an even dozen letters, and we both read them all while we sipped on our drinks. The letters were all from Swallow to Zoe, but I couldn't find anything wrong with them. They were mushy in spots, but hardly incriminating; no breach of promise, no passionate avowals of love undying. Mainly Swallow had referred to places they'd been together or plans they'd made for an outing. A careful boy, this Oscar. But all the letters were signed, "Love, Oscar." I wasn't sure whether or not that would mean anything in a court of law.

Finally we finished, stacked the letters again in the bookcase, and got up off the floor. It didn't seem that we'd accomplished anything. We went through a writing desk Zoe had used and I picked up a bulky book of mimeographed pages bound in a green paper cover. The name "Jungle Girl" was on the cover.

"This the movie?" I asked Sherry.

She took it from my hands and flipped through it. "It's a copy of the shooting script on 'Girl'."

"What would Zoe want with the thing?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. Shell. Sometimes she brought work home with her."

"I don't know the score, but there wouldn't be any work on this, would there? I understand they've been shooting for two weeks or so already, so this must have been finished weeks ago."

"Maybe she wanted to study it; she did a little writing herself. I don't know." She

shrugged again. I almost spoke to her about that shrugging. Then she added, "But, Shell, whoever was in here wouldn't be looking for this. There are lots of them around the studio."

"Yeah. Only there doesn't seem to be anything else here anybody would want. Hey, maybe he wanted you."

She laughed and walked away from me. We spent twenty minutes more looking over the house, then went into the kitchen, where Sherry mixed more drinks.

"I still don't know any more," I said, "except that the guy was after something for sure. Of course, maybe he got it."

There was only a little gin left in the bottom of the bottle, so Sherry turned the bottle upside down and split the remaining drops between our two glasses. "That's all she wrote," she said brightly. "No more." She smiled at me, her lips curving in that rainbowl look I'd first noticed about her.

"Think it's enough," I said.

Somehow we wound up back in the bedroom. I got into my uncomfortable chair and Sherry sat opposite me on the bed again. "Shell," she said slowly, not looking at me, "do you think . . . anything else will happen tonight? I mean, like that man coming back. I never laid anything like that happen to me before."

It was odd, but that thought hadn't even occurred to me until now. We'd been busy looking around and talking and I just hadn't thought about it. I knew it would have occurred to me eventually, though.

"I don't know," I said. "There's a chance." I thought about it. "Yes, yes, indeed. Look, Sherry, what say I stay here tonight. I could . . . sleep on the couch. Or on the lawn or something, ha."

She looked straight at me. Funny thing, she didn't appear frightened. "I'd feel lots safer," she said. Her face was solemn at first, then a slight curve appeared at the corners of her soft mouth. The curve widened perceptibly and soon she was smiling. "You wouldn't mind, would you, Shell?"

I had a gulp of my drink. "No, no. Sure not."

She drank the last of her highball and put the glass on the floor. She straightened up and started to yawn, covering her mouth with the back of her hand. Then, deliberately, she put her arms above her head and stretched, arching her back languorously. I sat right there and stared, remembering everything all over again. Old frustrated Shell Scott, that was me. I was an ambulatory emotional shambles, and at the rate I was going, pretty soon I'd be gone. My nerves were about to peel open like artichokes at a free banquet. One more frustration and there'd be no more tomorrow; I'd just die right here, stewed in my own juice. I was glad I'd had that last drink; right now no gin could even trickle down my throat.

Sherry sighed and I echoed her. She stood up. "Then it's all settled?" she asked me softly.

I nodded. She walked over to the door of the closet in the wall I was facing, opened it, and reached overhead for some sheets and blankets on a shelf. She carried them into the lighted front room and I saw her drop them on the couch. She came back into the bedroom.

"Sleepy?" she asked me.

"I've never been so uneasy in my life." Not exactly, I said hoarsely.

"Talk to me a little before we go to bed?" She laughed and said, "I mean before we say good night. Maybe we can forget all this trouble for a little while."

"Love to." I finished my drink and placed the empty glass beside hers on the floor. I said, "If I can talk, that is. I think I already mentioned something about your making conversation difficult."

She stood in front of me and looked at me for a long time. Finally she took my hand and pulled me up out of the chair. "Turn around," she said.

I was confused. What was going on here? Turn around? I turned and Sherry pushed me back toward the bed till my knees hit it and I sat down, more confused than ever, but not minding, a bit.

"Now you sit there, Shell," she said. "And don't look around. I'll try to make conversation less difficult."

I had a vague idea what she meant and there was a cold feeling in the pit of my stomach, like a sickness. Like sleeping sickness. "Oh," I said. "Ha. Ho. O.K."

She walked around the bed to the closet, which was now at my back. I heard her open the door again, then she said, "And don't look around, Shell. Please. I mean it. Promise?"

"Sure." Hell, I'd have promised to jump over the house.

I heard her moving around, things rustling, and that I didn't look is a tribute to my will power that will never fade. She said lightly, "A thick, lumpy old bathrobe, I think you said. There's an old one around here somewhere. If I can find it."

I didn't really care if she never found it. She said, "Oh, here it is. It's certainly old enough." Then came some more rustling, and finally she said, "There. Now it's safe."

I took that to mean I could look. At least that would be my excuse. I turned my head and Sherry was walking around the foot of the bed. She was wearing a heavy blue robe that she held together at the waist with her hands. Though the material was thick, I could see the mounds of her breasts moving under the cloth, and I knew she wore nothing underneath it. That cloth was as thick as my tongue.

She stopped six feet away from me. "Is this what you wanted, Shell?" She was smiling easily, and if she was as wound up as I was, she didn't show it. She looked as though she had everything under control. She sure as hell had me under control.

I said, "That's exactly what I had in mind, Sherry, but I've got a feeling it won't help conversation."

She laughed, throwing back her head, still standing a few feet away and holding the robe loosely, with one hand now. The robe gaped slightly open above her curled fingers and the swell of one heavy breast gleamed whitely from underneath the blue cloth. She looked at me again with her lips parted and her even white teeth pressed together in a tight smile.

"I'll tell you the truth," she said. "I didn't think it would. But you like it?"

"You need an answer?" I still sat on the edge of the bed, but after several seconds I raised my hands and held them toward her. "Come here, Sherry."

She didn't move for a moment. Then very softly she said, "I don't want you to leave me tonight, Shell."

CHAPTER TWELVE

I awakened with yellow sunlight soaking through the window shade and falling on my face. For a moment I was confused, looking around the room and at the gray rug that should have been the black one in my bedroom.

I felt Sherry stirring. And then I remembered.

"Hello," she said. She blinked her clear blue eyes a few times. "Why, I know you," she said. "You're Shell something." Then she laughed. "Yes, you're something."

This little lovely felt a lot better than I

do in the morning. I said, "If I'm not mistaken, we've met. Morning, Sherry. How do you feel?"

"Lovely," she said. "Perfectly lovely."

I grinned at her. Later I lit a cigarette, thinking I felt as fine as I had for quite a while. Sherry put her hand on the side of my face. "You need a shave," she said.

"I imagine I do. You sound domestic."

"Shell."

"Yeah?"

"I'm not . . . just another woman, am I? Or am I?"

I kissed her lightly on the lips. "No, Sherry. You're not. You're something pretty special."

She blew me a kiss and swung out of bed.

"Go on, you. Get dressed. I'll fix breakfast."

Breakfast sounded dismal. But I needed strength. This might be a big day ahead of me. I groaned, and agreed.

Sherry fixed me much more than I can usually manage that early. Over coffee I said, "You're a pretty bossy little female."

"I don't want you to go away from here hungry."

"I don't want to go away from here."

I grinned at her and finished my second cup of coffee. "Much as I hate to, honey, I've got to take off. Working man." I looked at my watch. "Lord, it's already ten o'clock." I pretended amazement. "Where does the time go?"

"Silly. You going out to location?"

"Yeah. Where is it exactly?"

She explained where today's shooting was, then said, "I'm supposed to be at the studio."

"You're not going, I hope. Not after last night. You'd better stay locked inside."

She nodded. "I believe I will."

I said, "Try to think of anything else about Zoe that might help you. Look through her stuff again. Maybe you'll find some gizmo that wouldn't mean anything to me, or remember something that's missing. Let your subconscious work for you. Look all the stuff over, think about it, then forget it. Read a book or—I leered at her—"paint a picture. Maybe something will come to you, bang, like that."

"I'll do it. Maybe I'll even go to the police again, see if that helps."

"If you do, have them pick you up here. I'll phone them and explain what happened." I stopped. "Don't know how I'll explain why I didn't tell them last night."

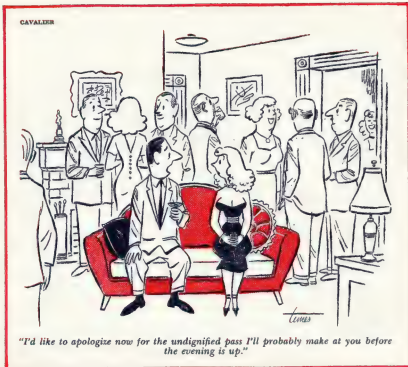
She smiled. "You'd better not explain."

I got up and she walked to the front door with me. I pulled the chair away from the doorknob. "Put this back when I leave," I said. "And don't leave unless you're with cops." I thought a minute, then took my gun from its holster. "Here. You know how to use this?"

She took it in her hand and gave it a look of obvious distaste. "Just pull the trigger thing, don't you?"

I groaned. "Yeah, you pull the trigger thing. But you don't have to pull that one very hard, so be damn careful how you handle it. And there's no safety on that gun." I let her look some more, then I said, "You simply point it at the man and pull the trigger. It makes a noise and he falls down. You don't even have to cock the hammer, but you can if you've got time. It's a little more accurate that way. Incidentally—I pointed—"that's the hammer."

I didn't really know why I was telling her all this. She'd have been almost as well off with a rolling pin. It's almost a foregone conclusion that if two people who don't know how to shoot well or pull a trigger stand twenty yards apart and blaze away at each other, they can blaze for half a day and nobody will get hurt except bystanders. But she'd feel safer, and probably be safer, with it. I took off my coat, dropped the



"I'd like to apologize now for the undignified pass I'll probably make at you before the evening is up."

holster on the chair, and shrugged my coat back on.

"All right," she said, then placed the gun on the chair. "But won't you die it, Shell?"

"I'll be around a crowd of people out at the location, Sherry. I'll get the gun from you tonight, or when I get back. And look, don't let anybody in here, even though you've got the gun. Not till this mess is settled, anyway."

She smiled. "Yes, sir."

"I wasn't ordering you around, honey. But pretend I was. Well, so long."

"There," she said and kissed me with everything she had behind it. "That's something to remember me by."

I didn't like the sound of the words and a small chill crawled along my spine. "Don't put it like that, honey. I'll see you later. And I've got plenty to remember you by. O.K., stick the chair under the door. If you think of anything, can you call me at location?"

"There's a little diner a block or so from there. They'll take any calls up. 'By, Shell. You be careful."

She wasn't being very careful with that blue robe, and I almost went back in. But I managed to tell her good-by again and get out to the Cad. I waited till she shut the door, then drove away.

It was nearly eleven o'clock before I really got started toward location. I stopped and phoned Samson so he could have a radio car buzz by Sherry's once in a while. He said he'd fix it, then told me there was little new except obvious eliminations. It was looking more and more definite that one of those at the Thursday-night party had killed Zoe, though which one was still a mystery. After talking to Sam I had a shave, then headed for the "Jungle Girl" company.

Sherry had told me how to get there: out Cypress, the street she lived on, to Royal Road, then left for another seven or eight miles. A dirt road led the last half mile or so up to the location, which was part of the old Andersen Ranch. There was a lot of trees and brush in that area, and

the Genova crew had fixed up a large section of it to represent African jungle. I doubted that Louis Genova would be overly pleased when I drove up, but I wanted to talk to Swallow some more. And I had a few words coming up with Raul and King.

I drove out Royal Road to the railroad tracks at Aldous Street, by the old parking houses there, and stopped. One of the long, slow-moving freight trains that rumble through at eleven a.m. and at three and six p.m. was chugging past behind black-and-white-striped wooden bars that blocked the highway, while the electric semaphore signal clanged and flashed red. I cut the motor and had a smoke, glad I wasn't in a hurry.

I finished my cigarette and the diagnosis of my home town simultaneously with the departure of the last car of the train, then gunned the Cad toward Genova's jungle, with some trepidation.

The last half mile was over dirt road leading off the highway, and when I got to the end of it there was a space where several cars were parked. I locked the Cad and headed toward activity I could see fifty yards away. As I walked closer I could see a little clearing on the edge of the trees and half surrounded by them, with the cameras, lights, reflectors, and the rest of the paraphernalia set up for a scene in progress.

I stopped fifty feet away from the action so I wouldn't stir up any dust, thus causing Genova to have a foaming fit, and waited till the scene was wrapped up. Half a dozen shapely women cavorted around clad in outfits similar to the one Helen had been wearing at the studio yesterday. A little grass hut had been built next to the trees, and people roamed in and out of it, one of them looking a great deal like a witch doctor. He had something that looked like a dragon's head stuck over his own head. He jumped up and down waving some kind of wand and chanting something that sounded like "Zoombala magga hotchahotcha. Zoombala." Finally he finished, and the religious ritual was over.

I spotted Raul when the scene ended. The native priest took off his mask and scratched his head, all through saving souls for now. I walked up to Raul and patted him on the shoulder.

"Well, hi there, Shell," he said cheerfully. "The glamour of Genova Productions got you? Wish you'd been here for the last scene, pal. You could have substituted for the witcher. Wouldn't have had to use the mask."

"The hell you say. You seem in high spirits, Raul. You drunk?"

He chuckled. "Nope. But may I be struck dead if Evelyn isn't back. She's back, Shell." He was beaming at me. "Would you believe it? Came back last night. Don't know if she'll stay, but she says she'll stick around till this—you know, till it's cleared up. She heard about it on the radio. Waiting for me when I got home last night. Man, I am in high spirits. Blame me?"

"I'm damned glad to hear it, chum. No kidding. Hope it's O.K. from now on."

He sobered a little. "It will be if there's anything I can do now to make it that way. Believe me, I'm reformed."

I grinned at him. "I will when I see it." "You'll see it." He was serious, and I almost believed he meant it.

"You!" I didn't have to look; I knew who that was: Louis-the-fit-thrower Genova. I didn't even glance at him. He walked up beside me, then walked around in front of me and looked up. "What the hell are you doing here, Scott?"

I was getting awfully tired of this little man. I said, "You want me up here, or the cops, Genova? It's pretty damn obvious to everybody that Zoe was killed by somebody in your little group Thursday night. I mean to now around some more."

His voice seemed to get deeper. "I wasn't the only one there. Why do you keep following me?"

"I know you weren't. You got a persecution complex? I know who was there—including Raul here."

"Well, you can leave right now," he said. "Immediately."

"You know," I said, "you irritate me. And why the hell shouldn't I be here? I'm even a stockholder."

The damn thing slipped out. I'd decided, knowing how little love was flowering between Genova and me, not to mention that Bondheim had paid me in shares instead of money. But it was too late now.

Genova's black eyebrows went soaring upward, then descended farther down than they'd been before. "You're a what? A stockholder? Ah! A stockholder. You got it from Bondheim. I knew it; I knew it."

"Oh, shut up," I said.

That startled him. He glared at me and I dropped my gaze to his necktie. He saw me looking at it with a peculiar fixity of expression and he wet his lips. He looked around him at several of the cast and crew, and evidently decided he didn't want to dance with me in front of all these people.

He looked back at me and said loudly, "All right, Scott. But mark what I said: Keep away from the shooting."

That was the voice of infinite authority. "All right," I said. "I've got no intention of even breathing loud while you're working."

"See that you don't," he said. He nodded curtly and stalked away.

I turned to Raul. "Where's Swallow? He here? Or at the studio?"

"Studio, probably. But I know he intended to come out sometime today. We haven't been on location up to now and he wanted to take a look."

"Good enough. Say, there's something else. Tell me this, Raul. Any reason why Zoe should or shouldn't have had a 'Jungle Girl' shooting script in with her stuff?"

He shrugged his thin shoulders. "No reason why not. There's a mess of them around. She might even have typed the first ones up. I don't know. She typed all Swallow's dictation. And some of the other stuff. Why? What's with the script?"

"Probably nothing. Exactly what is the thing, anyway? That's what you make the movie from, isn't it?"

He nodded. "It starts out, usually, with a treatment, then maybe some more treatments, then a first draft and maybe a second and third draft and so on. Finally you get the screen play, or shooting script. Usually there's quite a bit of change in the script as it goes along, for one reason or another."

"Such as?"

"Oh, Genova wants a special scene in the thing. Or doesn't like something that is in. I even suggested some changes myself." He grinned. "Not bad, if I do say so."

I thought about my talk with Archer Block. "The script isn't just Swallow's brain child, then?"

"Lord, no. For a stockholder you show a remarkable ignorance of scripting. Two other writers besides Swallow worked on the thing one time or another." He shrugged again. "Oh, primarily it's his baby, but there are the changes I mentioned. Then like King wanting his part fattened."

"So you gave him some more guts, huh?"

He laughed. "That's about the size of it. Come on, I'll show you one of the things."

I followed him to a little gal sitting in a canvas chair with a bulky script in her hands. Raul took it from her and flipped the pages. "This what you mean, Shell?"

"Uh-huh. What's all the red pencil?"

He fanned the pages and found one with red lines forming a big X clear across it. "Those are some changes made even after the final script was ready. We've had to work on it quite a bit, more than usual on account of the damn budget. Had to cut out some entire scenes and change others."

"How is the budget?"

He nibbled at his thick mustache. "We're O.K., I think." He handed the script back to the girl. "We're damn close to that three per cent, but we'll make it with a hair to spare." He raised an eyebrow at me. "I guess you know about that, huh?"

"And how. If I hadn't, Genova would have informed me."

He grinned, then looked toward the grass hut. "About ready over there," he said. "Back to work. See you later?"

"Sure. And Raul, I feel almost as good about Evelyn as you do."

He smiled so big his homely face damn near got handsome. "Thanks. I figured you would." He walked off, already starting to shout.

I put a touch on my arm and turned. Helen stood beside me, her hair bright in the hot sun. "Hello," she said. "Remember me?"

She seemed a little more subdued than usual, and there was a look very much like reproof in her dark brown eyes. I said, "How could I forget? And, Helen, it's a good thing I did leave last night."

Her eyes widened. "What do you mean?" "Well, you know what happened when I phoned. I practically flew over to Sherry's, and she was in trouble, all right. Somebody sapped her."

"What? Sapped? You mean hit her?"

"That's right. She was out cold. And somebody took a shot at me. But nobody got seriously hurt." I reached under my coat to pat my gun, then realized I didn't have the thing. I looked around, feeling a little creepy, but there were all kinds of people nearby. It seemed unlikely that anything could happen to me in this mess of people. Then I remembered my reflections on Hollywood. No telling; maybe a rocket ship would land on me. I almost looked up.

"Oh, I am sorry," Helen was saying fervently. Then she added, "But in a way I'm glad, Shell. Look at me."

I'd been looking around and watching the final preparations for the next scene. I looked back at Helen. She was smiling a little bit again. "Then you really did have to leave, didn't you?" she asked me. "I thought about it till I'd almost decided you just didn't want—didn't want to stay."

"For Pete's sake, Helen. How silly can you get? I thought it was pretty obvious I wanted to stay. Very damned obvious, if you ask me."

She grinned. "It was. I'm foolish. But, Shell, why didn't you come back?"



Well, damn this woman to pieces. She was still built like something a sex fiend had fashioned, and she had all her beauty and glamour and polish, but she could sure back me into some peculiar corners. She noted my momentary hesitation and, more power to her, kept talking.

"Well, I'm glad nothing serious happened. Oh, how do I look?"

She was in brown slacks and a white blouse, shorter than usual in low-heeled shoes, and she looked very good.

"You look like the star that you are," I said. "But that's not a Jungle Gal costume, is it?"

She shook her head. "Uh-uh. I don't have anything to do until the big scene late today. King jumps out of a tree and rescues me."

"If he carries you off over his shoulder again, I want to be present."

She smiled, her lips thinning and getting that smooth, bloodstained look. "He doesn't, but if you like to. . . ." She didn't finish it.

"Like to what?"

She'd stopped smiling. "Never mind," she said shortly.

We talked casually for a while as the next scene was set up, then kept quiet while it was shot. After that the whole kit and caboodle started picking up the equipment and moving off.

"What happens now?" I asked Helen.

"They move around to the right about fifty yards. Farther in the trees, too. Some more scenes there, then the big one."

"The one you're in?"

"Uh-huh. That probably won't be till almost four, though." She started to say something else and stopped. She was quiet for a few seconds, then said lightly, without looking at me, "I'll probably go out to the little lake till then. It's so pretty out there."

"Where's that?"

"Maybe half a mile through the woods." She told me how to get there, giving rather explicit directions. I thought, then said, "It's such a pretty spot I'm surprised they aren't using it in the picture. But they aren't. They don't even go near it."

"Oh? Well, how do you like that? Pretty, huh?"

"And quiet. Well, let's follow the crowd. O.K.?"

We walked after the others and around to another clearing farther into the woods while the workers started setting up again. It was cooler in here, and the sunlight filtered down through the trees, thick branches interlacing over our heads. In all the time I'd lived in L.A. I hadn't known of this spot. It was cool and green, and ordinarily would have been peaceful. I could have spent a month here.

Suddenly I thought of something that should have entered my mind sooner. I asked Helen, "You see a copy of this morning's Crier?"

She shook her head and the long silver hair whipped around her face. "Nope. Want me to hunt one up?"

"Let's hunt one up together."

"No, you wait here," she said. "I'll bring you one." She skipped away, merry as a kid on vacation.

In a minute or two she was back with a Crier. "Here you are, sir," she said brightly.

"Thank you, ma'am." I flipped the paper open and found "The Eye at the Keyhole." There was nothing about me in the "Can You Guess?" part, and I skimmed over the rest of the column. Ah, there the little thing was. Fanny had printed a lovely retraction. Yes, she had. The old hag.

Shell Scott, one of the myriad local detectives, yesterday visited me in my office! The police will be happy to know that Mr. Scott intends to bring the mur-

derer of Joe Townsend, whom I told you all about yesterday, into my office today! At least, so he told me! Chiefie, look to your laurels!"

"Why, that slap-happy old bitch," I muttered.

"What?" Helen said abruptly. Apparently I'd muttered louder than I thought.

"Sorry," I said. "I was thinking out loud." I handed her the paper and pointed to the item. Helen read it through and then looked at me.

"Did you? I mean, did you tell her that?"

"Take it from me, Helen, if you read anything in that old goat's hysterical column, you'd best bet it is to forget it." I frowned. "As a matter of fact, I did and I didn't. She gets just enough truth in her stuff so it's not an out-and-out lie—but there's no truth in it either. If that's possible." Even from miles away, Fanny Hillman could reach me.

I ground my teeth together, entertaining pleasant visions of Fanny getting hit by a train or run over by wild horses. Then Helen patted my arm.

"Well, I'll see you later, Shell. If . . . if you get bored, come out and look at the little lake. But make a lot of noise if you come up. I might be swimming."

I came back from the wild horses. "Huh? Oh, sure. Fine, honey. Maybe I'll see you."

She stood by me for a moment longer, then wandered off. I decided to get away from the spot I was on. I wanted to be at least fifty feet behind the cameras when they started rolling. I spotted King talking to Raul; King was in his leopard creation again. Then, beyond them, I saw Oscar Swallow. He had on a cream-colored casual jacket today, with a maroon shirt buttoned at the throat, and light green slacks. He was talking to a couple of cute jungle girls in animal print and their own I walked over.

Swallow spotted me when I was ten feet away. "Ah, there, Scott, old man," he belatedly heartily. "You're getting to be quite a fixture, what?"

"What, indeed?" I said. "Tally-ho, you old rotter, you." Some perverse impulse had up and grabbed me. I even surprised myself. Swallow's face slid around like underdone Jello for maybe half a second, then it sort of congealed with a slightly sour expression. He searched for a couple of words, examined them, then let them out like pearls before swine. "The detective."

I had never before heard the words sound quite so nauseous. Then he added, "What brings you here, Scott?" He paused. "Old boy."

"You, for one, Swallow. I'd like a word with you if I can have one."

"Certainly, certainly. You may have all my words; all my lovely words."

I'd had very nearly all his lovely words. I could stand without becoming ill. I said, "Let's find a place not so crowded, shall we?"

The two cuties had been watching this exchange in silence, swinging their little heads from Swallow to me to Swallow. He reached over and patted the nearest one gently on her behind and whispered something to her. She smiled and nodded. Swallow turned and we walked off a little way from the others.

He leaned back against a tree trunk, one rubber-soled suede shoe drawn up under him while he accepted the bark. "Now," he said, "what is your pleasure, Mr. Scott?"

I didn't expect to learn anything important; primarily I wanted to see if he had any trouble with his expression while I talked to him. I said, "For one thing, I'd like to know where you were last night, Swallow. About eight o'clock."

He lifted his left eyebrow half an inch over the right one. That was all. He'd probably have done the same thing if I'd asked

him what day it was. "That's odd," he said slowly. "I was home. Watching television, if you must know. Is it important?"

"I thought maybe you took a shot at me."

He didn't answer for a moment, but his expression lost some of its usual striving for an effect of lofty cynicism. Then he said, "Shot at you? Why, great Scott, you would I do that?"

I didn't much like the way he said "great Scott." I let it ride. "I'm not sure," I told him. "But I thought I'd ask. There was a chance it could have something to do with Zoe Townsend."

"His lips curled slightly. "I thought we had eliminated me from your . . . examination."

"That was before I learned from the police that she was pregnant."

"Oh," he nibbled at his upper lip for a moment. "And what does that have to do with me?" He wasn't quite so poised now.

"Oh, come off it, Swallow. You know damn well what it has to do with you. I don't give a damn about your morals, but I am interested in the fact that Zoe was pregnant by you. Considering the further fact that she's dead."

"Now hold on," he said, and he drew in his breath for a little speech. "I deny categorically that there is any truth in your statement. There is obviously no proof. If Zoe was pregnant, that was certainly as much her doing as anyone else's—wouldn't you agree? And while I quite frankly admit, Mr. Scott, that the thought of my dandling a drooling monster on my knee is utterly repugnant, had I been responsible for what is euphemistically referred to as Zoe's condition, I should have done what is rather laughably called the 'honorable' thing. I should have made a dishonest woman of her." He paused as if expecting applause.

Nicely phrased, I was thinking, but none of it very new. I waited for him. He said, "And it really makes little difference whether or not you believe me, Mr. Scott. As for last night—" He went ahead and described in detail the television show he had watched, explaining that even if he couldn't prove his statements, because he was alone, neither could it be shown he was anywhere else. Precisely, he pointed out, because he was home. He finished, "And finally, you must have forgotten that I could not possibly have killed Zoe." He shrugged. "And as for shooting at you—great Scott, I've never shot at a thing."

I'd have liked it better if he'd said he had never shot at anybody. But he had, it would seem, spoken freely enough. I told him, "O.K., Swallow. I'm naturally anxious to learn who shot at me. So I can shoot him."

He grinned agreeably. "I hope you find him, Scott."

"I probably will. Oh, something else I've been meaning to ask you. You know, naturally, that Zoe headed for Raul's Thursday night." He nodded and said, "What's this about her intention to run you out of town? Doesn't that—"

I stopped. Swallow had, momentarily, lost some more of his poise. At least he looked much less agreeable for a brief moment, but he recovered quickly and smiled. "Run me out of town? I've never heard anything so idiotic. What on earth would give her that idea?"

"That's what I was wondering."

He didn't say anything. I asked him, "And speaking of shooting, since you're the screen writer, maybe you'd know why Zoe had a 'Jungle Girl' shooting script in her things."

He shrugged and said loftily, "Why shouldn't she have a copy? They're free." He chuckled but it didn't quite come off.

I didn't say any more, hoping he'd go on, but he merely waited for more questions, if any. We spent a few more minutes talking.

but nothing important developed. Finally I left him to, watch the shooting, and Swallow went back to his pouting brunette. The other one was with a bunch in front of the cameras by now.

I waited while the scene was shot, then hunted up Raul again. King was with him, still looking surly—especially when he looked at me.

"How's it going?" I asked Raul.

"Hi, Shell. Smooth enough. Just going over a scene with Doug. Come along if you want."

King gave me a look that was apparently intended to scare hell out of me, so I said, "Sure, thanks." I grinned at Raul. "Got to learn more about the business I'm in."

King spoke for the first time. Obviously referring to my detective business, he said, "It's about time, Scott."

I ignored him and walked on the other side of Raul as the three of us started walking deeper into what everybody called the jungle. Quite a jungle it was, too. The prop men, carpenters, gardeners, and others of Genova's crew had labored long over one area here, adding trailing vines and brush and clearing "animal" paths through one section. We walked along one of the paths, and as we passed a tall, sturdy tree Raul jerked a thumb at it and said to King, "That's the second tree. There's the rope you'll use, right off that platform."

I looked up as we went by. Boards had been nailed together to form a platform about twenty feet up in the tree, a bit like tree platforms I'd built when I was a kid. We walked on without speaking until Raul stopped at the base of another huge tree with a wooden ladder leaning against one side of the trunk.

He grinned at me as I stopped beside him. "Your education continues, Shell."

Then he turned to King and I listened, fascinated, as he talked. "O.K.," Raul said, "you're getting away from the great apes, see? They're mad at you. You leap into this tree here and let out one of those aaah-ee-aaah noises."

So King was going to leap into the tree. I counted the rungs in the ladder: twelve of them. Nice leap.

Raul continued, "You hear them coming. There's ten of them, too many for you to handle, and besides, you know the cannibals are burning the women at the stake up ahead of you. And you've got to save your mother before her turn to get toasted. You're really in a spot."

Mentally, I agreed. It would seem that Bruta was going to have a lot on his hands. We'll cut in a shot of the women here—they hear you yelling and know they're practically saved, see? Then your mother clasps her hands and sobs, 'Bruta!' Then we shoot you—"I was thinking that here was an excellent idea—"and you grab the rope and swing over to that other tree, grab the rope there, and swing off. That takes you right into the clearing and you let go and drop down by the stake where the doll is burning. O.K.?"

"O.K.," said Bruta.

"Now," Raul said, "we've got it all cleared away through here," he pointed down the line from this tree to the other one—"and we'll shoot from an angle so it looks like you're brushing limbs and having a hell of a time. But there's nothing to it: just swing, plop, and she's all over."

"Nothing to it," said Bruta.

They stood facing back toward the set and talked some more. I wandered off a few feet to their left, looking the place over. I noticed a thinning of the brush ahead of me and my eye caught a hand-painted sign just as Raul yelled, "Hey, Shell, watch your step. Hell of a drop past the brush there."

I told him thanks and examined the sign, which was a warning to anybody who might

trot carelessly through the brush. I went through, carefully, and took a look. Raul hadn't been kidding. There was a natural open space here, and about fifteen feet from the sudden edge of the thick brush the ground dropped down in a sheer, dizzying fall to sharp rocks below. The cavity was no more than twenty-five or thirty feet across, but it was twice as deep, as if the earth had split at this point and been pulled apart. I edged closer to the brink of the cliff and peered over, and the sudden dropping off of solid ground made me feel lightheaded and dizzy.

I looked down to the rocks below, thinking that here was a made-to-order spot for somebody to have an accident. Me, maybe. An unreasoning fear swelled in my throat as I remembered I wasn't armed and that both Raul and King were somewhere behind me. I swung around, staring, but nothing was near me except the edge of brush a few feet away. I could hear the two men talking indistinctly. I walked back to them feeling silly, but still a little weak in the knees.

When I came up, King looked at me and said, "For God's sake, shame. You still around? Why don't you crawl off in the bushes? Go fall off a cliff."

"Why don't you shut your face, King?"

"Well," he said slowly, "if that don't beat all." He was starting to grin at me. "I guess we can't be friends."

He turned and faced me, squaring his shoulders. I stepped up in front of him and looked down at his eyes, an inch or two below mine, and much closer together.

"Listen, friend," I said quietly, "it's time I squared you away on something. The only reason I didn't mess up your stupid face yesterday is because Genova thinks I'm trying to ruin his goddamn movie. I'd love to put you in a plaster cast, and the only reason I don't do it right now is because I don't want to disappoint your public. Even idiots deserve a break."

I blinked at me, surprised at my sudden outburst, then he grew his snout again. "Sure," he said. "Sure. Well, how about right now, us two—"

"Doug," Raul said beside us, "for God's sake forget it, will you? You too, Shell, how about it? Have a goddamned duel if you want to, but do it next week. God knows we got enough trouble."

I turned away from King and stepped back. "Sure, Raul. Sorry I popped."

"You back down goddamn easy," King said.

I said an unclear word. The main trouble with this boy was simply that he was a boy: he'd never grown up. If he had a problem, he hit it. "O.K., King," I said. "You got me scared. I'm in a purple funk. Now beat it before I get over it." I was right on the edge of forgetting all my fine resolutions.

Raul took King's arm and tugged at him. "Come on, Doug. They must be about set up by now. Come on, let's get back there."

King slowly cleared his throat and looked around, looked at me, looked around some more, then he spat at his feet. He turned and stalked away, King of the Jungle.

I watched them till they got out of sight, then turned my hands over and looked at them. They were wet, shining with perspiration. The muscles in my face felt tight and drawn.

I turned around and walked in the opposite direction from them, away from the cameras and crew and Genova and King and all the rest of them. I was getting pretty sick of the whole mess; the case, the people, all of it. I walked aimlessly for a while, then suddenly realized where I was headed. I was almost to the lake, the little quiet lake that Helen had mentioned.

I stopped for a moment, then kept on walking, knowing now where I was going.

I didn't see Helen. Not right at first, that is. What she had referred to as a lake was an oval body of water about fifty yards across and twice as long, and it had another body in it that I didn't spot immediately: Helen's. The lake was surrounded by trees that blocked the water from sight until you were almost on its edge, and this was a cool, quiet spot, as Helen had described it. I walked to a big boulder near the edge of the water and sat down on it, the sun pleasantly warm on my face now that I was out of the trees' shade.

"Hello-o-o! I wondered if you'd come." I didn't locate the source of the voice right away, but I knew it was Helen. I looked around the lake, then spotted some ripples almost at the far edge opposite me, nearly fifty yards distant. Right in the center of the ripples was Helen's head, but she had her silver-blond hair tucked into a white bathing cap.

She laughed and the happy sound floated across the water to me. "Come on in," she called. "This is wonderful!"

"I can't, Helen. No suit."

She laughed delightedly. "You're one of Raul's prudes," she shouted, then turned and began swimming toward me, her arms flashing in a smooth, strong crawl. I could see the pale gleam of her head under the water, distorted by the refraction of light. Not too distorted.

"You coming in?" she asked me. She chuckled. "You don't know how good it feels. You'll like it, Shell."

"Bet I would. Uh, I dunno."

"I've been all alone here. Not a soul but me—and you, now. It's like being cut off from the rest of the world. Come on in, I'll race you across."

I didn't say anything, just looked at her as she smiled at me. She gave a little push with her feet and floated toward me, almost up to the very shallow water extending a few feet inward from the lake's edge. Then she curled around and floated on her back, kicking her feet and pulling her arms slowly through the clear water as she moved away from me again and stopped about where she'd been before. If that was a suit, it was the goddamnedest suit I'd ever seen.

"I hoped you'd come, Shell. Hurry up." She paused for a long moment. "Hurry up and get undressed. You can't swim in all that. Well! Last chance, Shell. Better hurry."

She turned and began swimming lazily toward the center of the lake. I thought about all this for a minute. Come to think of it, I'd given this lovely little doll a pretty bad time. I hadn't meant to, but if I ran away again she'd think I didn't like her, that something was horribly wrong with her. She'd start wondering what she'd done to deserve this. She might start thinking she had no sex appeal. She might lose her grip on reality, that was what. Yes, sir, she'd go mad. I certainly couldn't let her go mad.

The water sure did look good. I got up and went over behind my boulder and took off my clothes. I had it figured out now: I owed it to Helen. Hell, I owed it to me.

I was all ready to go, but I still stood behind the boulder. Right then I thought of Sherry, but it seemed a little late to back out now. To be perfectly frank, I didn't intend to back out. Still, I wanted to be sure I had this all figured out logically. I was sure I did, but I was convincing myself. From about twenty yards out Helen called "Hurry up!" and that finished convincing me.

I ran pell-mell around the boulder and my feet splashed in the water. Helen

squealed. I let out some sort of squeal myself. And then I dived in and started swimming toward her.

She waited for me, not swimming away, not racing me across. Five yards from her I stopped swimming and looked at her. She was moving her arms easily, holding herself afloat.

"That's better," she said. "I was beginning to wonder if you were coming in. Doesn't it feel good?"

"It does." I paddled slowly toward her.

"Shell," she said. "I'll meet you halfway."

The few feet between us melted until we were two feet apart, one foot, and then nothing was between us. Helen's skin was incredibly smooth in the water as it touched against me. She smiled, close to me, holding her head above the water as I reached for her, then had to sweep both hands through the water to keep from going under.

Helen laughed and swam backward a few feet from me, then forward again. "I told you it was nice in the water, Shell. Doesn't it feel good?" She laughed again and repeated, "Shell, doesn't it feel good?"

"Wonderful," I said, then added, perhaps a bit ungraciously, "A guy could drown."

She spun around in the water, still laughing, and swirled in a complete circle, as happy and abandoned and unselfconscious as if she were a child who had never learned one mustn't do this or do that, had never heard which moral or religious taboos were momentarily being observed. It occurred to me that, in her own way, Helen was just as honest as my friend Captain Samson.

She swam up to me again. "A guy could," she said. "Shell, hold your breath. And then hold me."

I took a deep breath and held it as her arms went around me and then I pulled her smooth body close against mine as the water closed over our heads. Under the surface of the water there was shimmering light, and looking through it I could see Helen lean slightly back from me, her eyes open.

Her fingers caressed my back, then she pressed her hand against my chest and wriggled away underwater, swimming rapidly till she arched her body and shot upward. Looking after her I could see the sun-bright ripples spread where she broke the surface and filled her lungs with air, her body seeming suspended from the surface of the lake, and then she curled over and swam downward again, her arms sweeping smoothly ahead of her and then gracefully back to her sides. She was lovely and almost unreal, and more graceful here than she had ever seemed before, almost as if this were her natural element, as if she were actually one of those mythical goddesses who lived in fabled waters.

I surfaced and gulped at the air, then dived and swam to Helen again as she watched me and moved her arms only enough to keep her submerged beneath me. It was as though she lay on her back a few yards from me, suspended on an invisible cushion underneath her, her long, curving legs stretching downward toward the bed of the lake. She seemed to hang there in watery dimness as I drew nearer, as if we were swimming in a fluid space that half supported us, and then I felt the touch of her hands again.

She swam away from me, surfaced, and stroked for the far shore as I followed her. She reached the edge and walked out of the water until she stood on green grass, then turned and waited with her arms at her sides as I felt the soft earth beneath my feet. She waited for me as I moved toward her, the sun behind her outlining her body and glinting from the bright droplets that clothed her. I reached her and our arms went around each other and finally our lips came together in the culmination of all our play and caresses. For immeasurable time we



stood there, pressed close together, and I could feel the red beat of the sun against my closed eyelids, feel the pulse of Helen's heart mingling with mine, and then slowly, with our lips still tightly joined, we sank to the grass at the lake's edge to lie there full length beneath the sun as it moved across the sky and edged closer to the horizon.

We had been talking for quite a while. I had told Helen of my growing up in L. A., going to war, and then settled all the problems of the universe, as men will. She'd told me of her childhood in a small town in Colorado, high-school dramatics, jobs, the movie talent scout. She shifted on the grass and continued talking. "So I made a test and got the part. Had a few supporting roles at Paramount, but then they forgot to pick up my option. After that Genova gave me the starring roles in 'Jungle Woman' and 'Jungle Girl.'"

"You can star in my movie when I make one."

"Oh? You going to make one?"

"No."

"Well, it was a nice thought," she said. She looked down the length of her body. "I'd better be careful. I'll get sunburned."

"Go get some clothes on and you won't. But on the other hand, what's a little sunburn? I'll probably peel all over." I grinned at her. "I think my back is peeling already."

She laughed. "Your back? You know, I thought you didn't like me. I thought something was wrong with me."

"You know better now?"

"Uh-huh. Glad you . . . came swimming?"

"That's obviously a rhetorical question."

"If you ask me," she said seriously, "I think we're pretty good swimmers."

"Agreed. And if you don't get dressed I'll take you swimming again."

She laughed, got up, and ran into the water. I got to my feet, a bit unsteadily, perhaps, but she shouted, "You stay there. I'm all grasy." She swam out a few yards, then walked out of the water. "Keep away from me," she said. "I've got to get back to the set."

"Where's your stuff? Your clothes, I mean."

"Over there." She grinned. "In the bushes. I'm getting dressed."

I looked far across the lake to a little pebble behind which were my clothes. I wondered if I could swim all that way.

Helen saw where I was looking and said, "I'll meet you over there, Shell."

"O.K." She disappeared into the brush. I looked out across Lake Michigan. I looked a while longer and waded into the Atlantic. I was going to have to stop smoking. I was sure going to have to stop something or other.

I swam about thirty yards and stopped and dog-paddled. Be sad if I got stuck here and drowned. Be like they say, though, if a bit indirect: Be a wonderful way to die.

At last I kicked out with my feet and got ready to have at it again, and almost simultaneously with my movement a little waterspout kicked up in front of my nose and I heard a loud bang. That was odd, I thought. That bang had sounded like a gun going off. And that little waterspout was like a bullet might make plowing into the water. It was odd. Hunters? What the hell were they hunting for, fish? I looked to my right and suddenly realized it was open season on Shell Scott. That's what they were hunting.

"They" consisted of two guys at the edge of the lake on my right, maybe forty yards from me. It looked as if one of them had a pistol in his hand, but from forty yards away it didn't worry me much. The guy with the rifle worried me, though. I saw him snap the gun to his shoulder and point the damned thing at me and I started swimming like a fiend. I must have leaped halfway out of the water and my arms started whirling around like propellers.

Even with all the noise I was making I heard the sharp crack of the rifle and felt something burn across my back. I nearly fainted. I tell you something in all sincerity: There is almost nothing as disheartening as somebody shooting bullets at you. Those things can kill you.

I was closer to shore now, but the two men were running around the edge of the lake to cut me off. For a moment I didn't know what to do, and the thought flashed through my mind that first it had been the little guy with the bald spot and now it was two gunmen; somebody was working hard at killing me. And unless I did something quick, this time he'd make the grade.

For a long second my thoughts were confused, and then out of nowhere the picture of Helen's shapely body twisting and arching

underwater came to me and I saw the obvious way to get away from these guys. Deep underwater they couldn't see me, but I had to come up sometime for sure. If I came up near them, I'd come up with a hole in my skull.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw the two men running on my right, then one of them stopped and dropped to one knee, and I knew he was aiming at me. I didn't dive right then; I just had to hope if I was going to get out of this at all, that the guy would miss this once more. I swung my body around to my left and took three hard strokes toward the far bank away from the men, angling in toward the shore I'd started for originally, feeling a dozen times in those short two seconds the thud of a meal-jacketed slug plowing into my back. But the thud didn't come, though somewhere in there I heard the rifle crack, and the zing of the bullet ricocheting from the flat surface of the water. I sucked in all the air I could hold and dived. Deep under the water I doubled back and started swimming as fast as I could toward the spot where I'd last seen the two men. If they ran on down toward the far bank I'd be O.K.—if I could last to the lake's edge. But there was no if about it; I had to last.

I swam with my eyes open, forcing myself to stay down beneath the surface, pressure already building up in my eardrums and the ringing starting inside my head. I swept my arms back with all my strength and kept my feet churning frantically—and I still hadn't felt the lake bottom under my fingers. I could feel the pressure swelling at the back of my fingers, getting stronger and almost painful as my blood ate the oxygen out of my lungs. I couldn't last much longer, I knew, but the bank couldn't be far away now.

Then my fingers scraped the lake bottom and I could see, as if through a haze, the surface of the water only four or five feet above me. I gave one more lunge, kicking hard with my legs, then got my feet in the ooze beneath me and straightened up as I thrust myself forward.

There was going to be no looking around and trying this a second time. Wherever I came up I had to start running—either away from those two bastards or straight toward them. I couldn't give them time to set up on

opposite sides of the lake and make bets on which one would get to shoot me.

My head burst from the water as I straightened up, the water still waist-deep, but I plowed forward through it, looking sharply around to find the men.

I saw them thirty yards on my left, still looking out toward the middle of the lake. The resisting water dragged against my hips, holding me back, slowing me down as I slashed through it toward solid ground. I heard one of the men yell and then there was the heavy cough of a big handgun and a slug split the air alongside me. As my feet splashed clear of the water I heard another shot and from the corner of my eye saw the two goons start running toward me. I put my head down and sprinted with all my strength toward the protective covering of brush a few feet ahead, then crashed through it and into the gray shadows of the trees.

I ran at top speed for another twenty or thirty strides, then had to slow down. I'd had to hold my breath too long underwater and I was faint and dizzy. Spots swarmed in front of my eyes and my heart slammed solidly inside my chest. I kept running, hardly more than trotting, trying to suck in enough air through my open mouth to clear the fuzziness from my mind. At least I was leading these goons away from Helen. Sure, that's what I was doing: I was running away to protect her. Finally I stopped for a few seconds and listened.

I could hear them charging along behind me, getting closer, and finally I spotted a flash of green from one man's shirt. It was the guy with the pistol and he blazed away at me again.

What the hell; I started running some more.

Even those few seconds of rest had helped, and though I didn't think I could run to L. A. at this pace, I could keep on a while. And I guess I must have gotten a second wind, or a third one or something, because my breathing came a little easier and pretty soon I was flying through the jungle like crazy. Now I was really moving. The two who had chosen me were right behind, though, and I couldn't tell if they were gaining or not; it didn't seem possible. They were still shooting at me, too, and you know how I feel about bullets.

I was scared, all right. I was so scared that if I'd had time I'd have stopped right there in the bushes. But I sure didn't have the time. And, man, I was running. I was running so fast I thought my legs were just going to rip away from me and go chattering through the woods. I only hoped no tree showed up smack in front of me, because it would have been me or the tree. I was on a 180-degree knee, and I couldn't even veer without busting something.

I was stepping on thorns and pebbles and brambles but I kept on going. Feet, I said, you don't feel nothin'; but finally I started slowing down more and more; I wanted to keep running, I wanted to very badly, but I was wearing down to a nub. I was working just as hard as I could, but I wasn't going very fast any longer. The men behind me sounded closer now, though there hadn't been any shots for a while. Then, suddenly and frighteningly, I burst into a familiar spot and knew I'd have to change course or kill myself.

The cliff I'd looked over earlier this morning was dead ahead now; I was back where I'd started. And I didn't think I could make it more than a few feet farther. I was dizzy, and as tired as I'd ever been in my life, and I was damn near ready to stop and let the boys shoot me. I couldn't have slugged either one of them hard enough to bend one of their whiskers. I was pooped.

But I managed to keep my feet moving, as behind me the crashing sounds got closer and louder. I saw the tree Raul and King had been discussing this morning, and I looked at the little ladder up its side—with no amusement this time. I started to trot right on by, and then I stopped. If I could get up those silly steps into the tree, maybe those bastards chasing me would run right on by and over the cliff, and I'd stand on my platform and listen to them thud, and laugh and fall out of the tree. It seemed entirely logical, so up I went.

I made it, somehow, and while I crouched in my tree the goons burst out of the brush and went charging around thirty feet below me. They didn't run over the cliff, worse luck, but one of them burst through the brush behind me and let out a huge snarl, then came back and babbled something to his partner. They both went out and looked over the cliff's edge, but I knew they didn't see me down there. Then they came back through the brush, saying something I couldn't hear, and standing still while they listened to see if they could hear me barreling through the trees.

I was standing up there shaking like a snapped rubber band, and then the guy with the revolver in his hand pointed to the ladder against the trunk of the tree. My tree.

He started to look up. Well, I'd made a nice try, but I'd sure got myself into the damndest position now. If they shot holes in me, I hoped I leaked all over them. I turned and looked longingly toward where I knew about a hundred people were, all unaware of this matter of life and death—my life and death—and there dangling in front of my nose was the rope.

Rope? What rope? And then I remembered. Hell, yes, Bruta's rope. It disappeared high over my head, attached to something up there, but I didn't care if an angel was holding it just so it was tied to something. I grabbed it, made sure it was free at my end, and then froze.

"There's the bastard. Good God, there he is."

I looked down and to my left and the little man with the revolver was pointing at me. He was pointing at me with the revolver. There was no help for it: Hollywood had a new ape man. I grabbed tight onto a knot in the rope, shoved off into space as the gun cracked behind me, and then I went flying through the air like a bird.



"You mean this is the blonde white goddess the natives were talking about!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I heard another shot crack out, but it was far behind me now. It had to be; I was going about five hundred miles an hour. Everything was a blur of green and brown, and confused colors, and trees and limbs whipped backward past me. Right square ahead of me was a gigantic tree, and it was coming at me like a monster. I swooped through the air in a long arc, swinging almost to the ground, and then I was zooming up at that gigantic tree, hanging for dear life onto the knot in the rope. I was very nearly a gibbering wreck, and I had never conditioned myself to face this particular situation. And I couldn't help thinking what would happen if I let go. I'd simply sail along in a sort of free fall till I hit something and mashed. At the end of the giant swing I felt myself starting to slow down, and there was the platform in the tree ahead of me. I was headed for it, and I'd better reach it or I'd go swinging right back to my two buddies.

There was a convenient handle already nailed on a limb to facilitate Laura's big swing, and I lashed onto it and clung there desperately, then hauled myself onto the platform. I'd made it this far, and I had more respect for King, who, in referring to this horror, had said, "Nothing to it." But probably he hadn't yet tried it.

The other rope was there ready for me. I didn't wait for another bullet to swish past me or into me; I grabbed the rope and took off again. I was almost starting to enjoy it. I was even looking ahead now, wind whistling in my ears as I tried to pick out my next tree.

Then, too late, I recalled that there wasn't any next tree. With a great sadness I remembered where this scene was supposed to end. Too late, all right; I couldn't go back now.

So I went piling out between a couple of trees and a mess of bushes, slowing down now at the end of the swing, and as I busted out into the open, lo and behold, there were a whole passel of people dancing around a stake. There just wasn't anything I could do about it, and I let go. I had reached the end of my rope.

I went sailing down through the air, catching a blurred glimpse of cameras and people and what looked like confusion, but if it was confusion right then, it was wild pandemonium when I landed. I hit the dirt and rolled and skinned myself and wound up sitting on my aching posterior staring square at a lady tied to a stake with what looked like solid ropes.

They weren't solid ropes, though, because she eyeballed me and let out a great big "Aaaahhhhh!" and busted loose with no trouble at all. She went racing away, still screaming. All hell seemed to break loose and I saw another gal screaming, and a man yelled something horrible, and another man yelled "Cut!" and the script girl started flipping pages frantically.

I didn't sit there very long. I spotted a rifle near me, right alongside a guy in boots and heavy trousers and a pith helmet, and I got up and grabbed the rifle and went flying back into the jungle.

I was so mad I was burning to kill someone, and I was pretty embarrassed, too. Yes, I was mighty embarrassed. It isn't every day you drop naked out of the sky in front of a hundred people.

I cradled the rifle in my arm and ran back toward the two men who were, as far as I was concerned, responsible for all my troubles. I was so mad that the first thing I saw that moved I was going to shoot at till it stopped moving. The men hadn't busted out of the trees into the clearing after I had, so I figured they must have heard all the screech-

ing and uproar that had arisen when I dropped in. There was a chance they'd taken a powder; if they had, I'd chase them for a change.

I paused for a moment and hurriedly checked the rifle before I went any farther. It was a sleek Winchester bolt-action job, the Model 70, with a recoil pad instead of the usual steel butt plate. I could operate the safety lock, so I knew the firing pin was cocked, but I slid the bolt back till I caught the gleam of a brass cartridge case in the breech, then shoved the bolt forward and pushed the safety lock to its intermediate position. I started trotting again, the gun cocked and a cartridge in the barrel; I was ready for an elephant if I saw one.

Fifty yards farther in the trees I heard the two men. I walked slowly forward until I spotted the guy in the green shirt, facing me and saying something to the other man, whom I couldn't see. I leaned against a tree trunk to steady myself, raised the gun to my shoulder. I thumbed the safety off and curled my forefinger around the trigger, sighted down the barrel, and centered the sights, the dull gold bead of the front sight on the left pocket of the green shirt, squarely over his heart. I took a shallow breath and held it, gripped the small of the stock firmly with my right hand, and started slowly to squeeze the trigger.

I was tired and a little shaky, and the rifle barrel wavered, the front sight dancing off to the left, then back to the middle of that pocket again, and suddenly the violent anger went out of me, the fury lessened, and I eased the tension on the trigger. I couldn't murder the guy in cold blood. But I could shoot him. I shifted my aim to his shoulder, steadied the gun, held my breath again, and squeezed the trigger.

The rifle butt kicked against my shoulder and the surprisingly loud blast echoed among the trees as I rolled my head a little to the left and slapped the bolt up and then forward and down again, my finger finding the trigger, the rifle still solidly against my shoulder. For a moment nothing happened. Then Green Shirt swung around, yanking his revolver up. I stepped away from the tree, sighted and fired and worked the bolt again in almost one motion as he spotted me and returned my fire. Then he let out a yell, turned, and started running away from me, followed by the other man. Now I could kill the sonofabitch. I took my time, planted my feet firmly, sighted carefully at the green back, squeezed off a perfect shot, and waited. By God, that one got him square between the shoulder blades. He ran merrily away.

I let him run. It had dawned on me that something was sure as hell peculiar about this elephant gun of mine. I jacked another shell into the barrel, stood three feet away from the wide trunk of the tree on my left, and shot at it. Then I carefully inspected the tree trunk for the hole. No hole.

Naturally there's no hole, Scotty, you fool. The hole's in your head. Be careful or all the rocks will fall out. Those bullets were as blank as my future. But at least the sound of two brave men up ahead was growing fainter. They wanted nothing to do with me now that I was armed. Hell, I was even out of the barrel, stood three feet away from my elbow and headed back for the lake.

Before I got there I'd had time to inspect myself, and I was going to be quite a while healing. I'd been cut and scratched and I was bruised and pretty well bent. The rope burns on my hands were starting to hurt now, too, but that was the least of my worries.

At the lake I looked carefully around without seeing anything moving, then got my clothes from behind the boulder. It seemed that my luck had changed: No one had tied knots in my clothes. I went back into the

woods and dressed. It was, I decided, about time. I started back toward the set, filled with an almost overpowering desire to go in the opposite direction, maybe as far as the Pole, but I'd done every last bit of running I intended to do. Even so, each step that took me closer to the recent pandemonium was harder to take than the last.

I circled around and came out of the trees more than a hundred yards from the cameras and activity. I'd ruined one scene; I wasn't about to stroll into another one. I waited till it appeared that the action had momentarily stopped, then walked up to the crowd from the rear. I headed for Raul. He might be the only friend I had left in this gathering—and possibly even his affection was wearing a bit thin.

A take had just been finished and I got almost up to the crowd before anybody spotted me. As I walked toward the first audacious eye that raked over me was Louis Genova's. He looked ready to burst out crying at this crisis. That is, until he saw me. He came charging at me, his fists doubled up, and I thought he was going to jump up into the air and clout me one. Frankly, I wouldn't have blamed him, and I don't think I'd even have stopped him.

He came to a military halt in front of me and shouted, "I'm going to put you in jail! I'll put Bondshell in jail!" He went on until it seemed clear he was going to put everything back the jail in jail. He told me what he thought of me, my ancestors, and any future offspring I might have. I was the first glaring example of the reversed trend of evolution, and all by myself I was leading the human race downhill. He kept on and on and finally petered out.

Ordinarily during such a tirade I'd have spun his head on his neck like a merry-go-round, but this time I didn't even get mad. I just stood there, and I was as nearly at a loss for words as I had ever been. I didn't know quite how to start an explanation; there seemed such a lot to explain. And, too, I'd noticed Helen, in a "Jungle Girl" outfit now, standing a few feet away and giving me a friendly I'm-on-your-side smile.

At last Genova stopped ranting. "Well?" he asked with comparative calm. "Well? Well? Ha? Well?"

The other man borrowed was still in the crook of my arm. I said lamely, "I, uh, brought your gun back."

I thought foam was going to spurt out of his mouth, but he didn't speak. I said, "Listen, Genova, I'm sorry about the trouble. But if I'd wanted to mess up the take I could have thought of several simpler ways."

"Sorry! He's sorry!" Genova's face was getting redder. Then he wheeled quickly around and left.

Raul had stepped up alongside me by now, and he put a hand on my arm. "Shell," he said, "what happened, anyway? If that wasn't the damndest thing—what did happen?"

I told him, "Believe it or no, Raul, a couple of guys were trying to shoot me."

He broke in. "I heard some shooting. Hell, we all heard it. Stopped things for a minute, but then we started in again."

"Two guys," I said. "They chased me from—for about half a mile, and I climbed that damn boulder at this morning. They spotted me and I took off. Hell, there wasn't anything else I could do. I can't fly."

He grinned widely. "Well, you sure tried, pal. You played hell. King won't ever make the impression you did."

I looked around. I'd made an impression, all right. If there were a hundred people here, a hundred people were staring at me. One little blonde sweetheart saw me looking at her, put both hands behind her mouth, and giggled behind them, going up the scale like Margaret Truman. I believe I blushed. Hell, I know I blushed.

I said to Raul, "Tell me, how badly did I lose everything?"

"Not too much," he reassured me. "L. G. had a fit, but that's not unusual. We'll still make out O.K. Actually, we can still use the footage we shot." He chuckled. "Most of it, I mean."

He chuckled some more at me, and it's a sad commentary on my mental state at that moment that it wouldn't be until much later that I would realize exactly what he was chuckling about. "Something else, Raul. You see two gorillas around? A couple of strangers? Anybody drive up in a car in the last hour or so?"

He shook his head. "Nobody. No car, no nothing."

It was the answer I'd expected. Two torpedoes would hardly advertise their presence, and they were undoubtedly long gone now. I wondered how they'd known I was here. I hadn't been tailed from town, I knew. The logical answer was that somebody here had phoned from the diner after I showed up. Things seemed to be coming to a head.

"Raul, anybody make a phone call from the diner since—in the last few hours?"

"God knows." His brow furrowed as he got what I was driving at. "You mean—"

"Yeah. Scott's here; come shoot him."

He nibbled at his mustache. "Could have been anybody. Shell. Everybody's been wandering around part of the time. Most of us had lunch at the diner. Tell you one thing: I didn't phone anybody." He paused and asked, still frowning, "You really had some shots taken at you, huh?"

"Any number. I got one slice across the back, but otherwise I was lucky. I guess I was lucky. Well, it appears I've done all I can for one afternoon." I looked at my watch. It was already after four p.m. "Think I'll take off, Raul. You can get back to work."

He grinned. "We're almost finished for the day. Be through before long. You ought to stick around. Next take is the big one where King swings through the trees. That's the last, and then we knock off."

I winced. "I don't think I could bear to watch. But thanks. You can tell me how it comes out."

I turned and walked back to my car, a mass of scratches and welts and bruises, some of them mental. The worst spot was where the bullet had burned across my back, but it wasn't bleeding any more and I figured it would wait till I could have a doc pretty it up at my leisure. I started the motor and drove to the diner. The phone booth was outside, and the people inside didn't even know what was on the menu.

I headed back toward town, but I wasn't even in good shape for driving, and I had a hunger that was kin to starvation. So I stopped at the first clean-looking restaurant and tore into a rare sirloin steak. Over coffee I thought about the case from its beginning until now. I'd talked to everyone who seemed important in the case—though I hadn't chatted very freely with King—and I had quite a bit of miscellaneous information even if I didn't know what to do with it.

I lit a cigarette and smoked it, frowning. I

hadn't checked in with my client, Bondhelm, today, and I thought about him for a few minutes. He was going to be pleased with his choice of a detective when the latest news reached him. I'd considered almost everybody I'd run across in the case as conceivably being the murderer; how about the slimy Bondhelm? He stood to gain one hell of a lot from monkey-wrenching the movie, but I failed to see how strangling Zoe would help him. Furthermore, Bondhelm hadn't even been at Raul's that night. If it wasn't somebody at the Thursday-night party, it could have been almost anybody.

Now I was cooking: It was Zoe's childhood sweetheart from Podunk; he'd followed her to Raul's and strangled her when she didn't recognize him wearing a mustache. I jabbed at my cigarette and scowled at it. Everything pointed to one of the people at Raul's as the murderer, but I couldn't entirely eliminate somebody from the outside. Oh, this was great; I was a jim-dandy detective. Now I had it narrowed down to the world.

I sat at the table for a while longer, getting more and more depressed. If I kept going down at this rate I'd wind up psychotic. I didn't have one solid lead I could single out to put my finger on, but that was only half of it. I'd apparently done my best to sabotage "Jungle Girl," nothing was settled between King and me, Fanny the Fat Girl was roasting me to a crisp brown, Genova was ready to clap me in jail, people were still trying hard to kill me, probably nine-tenths of the "Jungle Girl" people figured I was not off my trolley but clear off the tracks, and both mentally and physically I felt like garbage. I was searching for one tiny ray of light when I remembered I was, at least, a stockholder in "Jungle Girl." At least I had that.

And that was the one that just about finished me. Finally the full significance of the pandemonium I'd caused on location hit me, and Raul's chuckling about salvaging most of the footage became horribly apparent. I wasn't only a stockholder in "Jungle Girl." I was in the damn picture.

I groaned, sagged a little lower in my seat, and groaned some more. Well, I could always tear up my license and go to Sherry's for consolation. That perked me up enough to get up from the table and pay my check. Then I remembered I hadn't left a tip. The hell with it; let the waiter be sore at me, too. I stopped at a phone booth on the way out, dialed City Hall and asked for Captain Samson in Homicide. There, at least, was one constant factor: While I was getting shot at and running through jungles, the efficient organization of the Los Angeles Police Department—one of the most efficient in the United States—was inexorably sifting a mass of details about Zoe and everybody even remotely connected with the case. Names, dates, backgrounds, records, the works. Might be Samson would have something he could pass on to me. Maybe the case was closed and I could buy a bottle of gin and a sack of oranges and head for Sherry's.

When Samson came on I said, "This is Shell. How's it going?"

"So-so. Is that you? You sound sick."

"I'm O.K. Must have been something I drank."

"Or read." He laughed uproariously. "I see you got your name in the paper again. One of the myriad local—"

"Lay off, Sam. You should know that lousy Fanny has eggs for brains."

Sam could always sense my mood pretty well. "O.K., genius. What you want? Bail money?"

"Not yet, but soon, maybe. Frankly, Sam, you've seen me in some pretty screwy situations in the last few years, but I don't think I've ever been screwed up like now." I briefed him on this lovely day and answered his questions. Finally I asked him, "You get-

CAVALIER



"Where's that seedy old suit, dear—the one I wear when I visit the doctor's?"

ting any dope on the Zoe business? I could use something."

"Just odds and ends, Shell." He rumbled on, his voice slightly muffled by the cigar undoubtedly in his kisser, telling me a few things the routine had come up with: Zoe was born in Kansas City—that let out the suitor from Podunk—and King didn't have a chance now in his custody case. That didn't bring tears to my ears. Sam went on, saying that Sherry had worked for an advertising executive before starting with Louis Genova Productions about a year back. He kept talking while I listened with about half my mind, which under the circumstances was not much mind at all, and then something he'd said roused me a little bit, started me working my way back up from bottom again.

"What was that one, Sam? About Oscar Swallow?"

"Huh? Oh, he didn't write that book of his, that 'Savage Christian' thing. Like I said, we talked to this Paul Jarvis that wrote it for him—ghosted it, he said. That happened over two years ago. Jarvis got practically nothing out of it; wasn't too happy. But we had to talk to him quite a spell to get it all out; seems it was a point of honor with him to keep it under his hat. Not cricket, he said."

"He ghosted the book for Swallow? Well . . ." I let it trail off, wondering about the new angle. I'd never cottoned to Swallow and his fake British accent, his borrowed witticisms, his studied and almost artistic dress, and now it appeared that in addition to everything else he was one of what I've always thought of as "The Brain Pickers." The sonofabitch.

Sam was saying, "That little gal with the shape was down here earlier. The one you phoned me about."

"Sherry? Lola Sherrard?"

"Yeah. Told her the same thing, Shell. She seemed as interested as you. What's the angle?"

"I'm not sure yet. Sam, you bring her down? She didn't come by herself, did she?"

"We picked her up. Took her home, too. She seems to think you've got something I never been able to see in you."

"How long ago was that, Sam? When did she leave?"

"I dunno. Maybe half an hour." He talked about the case a little longer, then I thanked him, told him I'd be down to make the crime report, and hung up. My depression was rapidly leaving me now, and the more I thought about what Sam had told me, the more ideas crowded into my brain. An idea, a hunch, almost a hope swelled inside me as I put this with what I already knew about Swallow: the kind of guy he was, Zoe working for him at the studio, her pregnancy, Swallow's crying that Zoe had killed herself. I fished another coin from my pocket and dialed Sherry's number, my brain starting to click.

The phone buzzed while I tried to reconcile Swallow's apparently perfect alibi for Zoe's murder with what looked like a beautiful motive. A double motive, at that.

The phone buzzed again and for a moment fear started building in me again as I remembered the last time I'd called Sherry only to receive no answer.

Then, the phone was lifted and her soft voice said, "Hello?"

"Sherry? This is Shell. I've got something. Maybe."

"Oh, Shell. I've been trying to reach you, but I didn't know where you were. I was just leaving."

"Leaving? What—"

"Shell, I know who killed Zoe. I know!"

"Yeah, well, I—"

"Was Oscar Swallow. Just like I told you right at first, Shell, he did it. That 'Savage Christian.' I haven't time to explain it all, but I figured the rest out after I got



"It's been nice talking to you, Alice, but I really have to run now."

home. He hasn't written anything—not even the scripts for 'Jungle Woman' or 'Jungle Girl.' Don't you see what that means?"

"Yeah, I think so. What do you mean you haven't time to explain?" Something was screwy; something I couldn't pin down was bothering me.

Sherry went rattling on, breathless and excited, spilling the words out in a rush. "Shell, Swallow stole both the stories for both his screen plays. That's why Zoe had a 'Jungle Girl' shooting script here! I got to wondering why Zoe would have those old pulp magazines in the house—you know, the one with the cover—and that's where Swallow stole his stories. He just stole them; lifted them right out of the magazines. He changed them a little, and by the time they were in shooting script they were practically different stories. Don't you see? That's what Zoe was going to tell everybody at the party. That's why he killed her."

She stopped, presumably for a breath, and I said, "This is coming at me pretty fast. It makes sense, but—"

She interrupted me. "Shell, I've got to run. I tried to reach you, but when I couldn't I phoned location and told Genova about Swallow, and why Oscar had killed Zoe."

"You what?"

"He was awfully nice to me. He complimented me and told me to come up to location and bring the magazines and everything. He's called the police already and said he was setting a trap for Swallow. Shell, isn't it wonderful? I'm so excited."

"I guess. I don't know for sure. You're a little ahead of me." I was trying to digest all this. It would appear that while I was interrogating the suspects down to the world, little Sherry had been wrapping up the case. Possibly it was time I got another job. Maybe I'd

go to Mexico and raise opioid. I could smoke it and dream I was a detective.

I said, "Slow down a minute, honey. What if Swallow should try something fancy? It might not be healthy for you to be around."

"Silly," she said, "the police will be there. Now I've got to run. I should have left ten minutes ago. You come over here and wait for me, Shell."

"Now, wait a minute, sweetness. You positive it was Genova you talked to? You sit—Hey, Sherry!"

She'd hung up. Damn it, I hadn't got this squared away yet. And that something I hadn't pinned down was still bothering me. I hung up, went out to the Cad, and started driving slowly toward Sherry's. It was ten minutes till six p.m.

When I turned into Cypress Avenue I still hadn't figured out how the hell Swallow could have killed Zoe. I'd checked him up and down, and he was the only one at the party who couldn't have done it. I could see how he might conceivably have lifted a couple of plots from an old, folded magazine, changed Martian greebles to African apes and switched them around a little, then put them through the idiotic Hollywood mill that twisted them inside out before they became sneak previews. And, remembering the red-penciled script I'd examined at location, I could see how he might even have got away with it. But if the guy had any sense at all, he must have known he couldn't go on like that indefinitely, that he'd have to expect trouble someday.

I was a couple of blocks from Sherry's house when I tried to picture what might have gone on last Thursday night at Raul's. Zoe had headed for there, ready to "run Swallow out of town," but she'd never got inside. Obviously she'd met somebody before

she got into the house, spilled some of her story, and been strangled for it, hastily weighted and dropped into the nearest hiding place: the pool. It had been sudden and savage.

The only people, really, who'd have stopped her from spilling would have been Swallow himself and maybe Genova. Besides that, King and Helen alibied each other—supported by little Dot—and if Raul had killed Zoe he'd certainly have had all the opportunity in the world to move the body away in the days and nights that followed. Nor would he have called a party knowing the body was in the pool.

I couldn't help imagining what would have happened to Genova, though, if Zoe had spilled to him—and it did seem likely that she might have spilled to the big boss. He'd have known immediately that there'd be a mess of scenes to reshoot, or at least the chance of a costly civil suit because of Swallow's plagiarism. Even if Swallow was liable, the mess would play bloody hell with the budget and foam would surely have spurted out of Genova's mouth when that idea hit him. He'd lose not only the hundred grand he had invested, but potential profits of several times that amount. . . . That idea hung on the edge of my mind as I suddenly remembered that of all the people present at Raul's Sunday party, Louis Genova was the only uninvited guest.

Just as easily and gently as that it slipped into my mind, in a kind of idle and half-smug train of thought, and even as I realized with a quick, cold, choking panic that there was no doubt now that Genova had strangled Zoe, I realized, too, that at this very minute he might be murdering Sherry.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

For a moment the realization stunned me. Everything literally seemed to stop inside my body; I stopped thinking, stopped breathing, it seemed that my heart stopped beating as

my skin got cold and my hands tightened on the steering wheel. Then I slammed my foot down on the accelerator and the Cad jumped forward the last half block to Sherry's home.

Maybe she was still there; maybe she hadn't left yet. If I could only catch her, stop her. I skidded to a stop in front of the house and sprinted to the unlocked door and inside, shouting her name. There was no answer, nothing. In the bedroom I looked frantically around the empty room, then whirled and started to leave just as my eye fell on the .38 Colt on the dresser. Good God, she hadn't even taken the gun! I scooped it up, checked the five loads, and dropped the gun into my coat pocket as I raced back to the still idling Cad, jumped in, and ground gears away from the curb.

My heart was pounding rapidly and hard, and the muscles were knotted in my stomach as I raced down Cypress and headed for Royal Road. How much time had she been gone? Five minutes? Ten? How much of a start did she have? I knew there were no police at location, no Swallow, just Genova—and maybe Sherry by now. Genova was the bastard who'd sicked the baldheaded character on my tail and just today phoned the two torpedoes from location. He was the guy who'd busted into Sherry's looking for Zoe's evidence against Swallow, and taken a couple of shots at me.

My foot was pressed to the floor boards and the Cad was still accelerating. I gunned straight ahead through intersections, one hand pressed on the blaring horn. At Royal Road I jammed on the brakes and the tires screamed and slipped as I skidded in a wild left turn through a red light, my eye spotting a black police radio car facing the opposite direction on Royal, a uniformed patrolman standing beside it.

I sure couldn't stop, but I wanted the police along if I could get them. I pulled the .38 from my pocket, stuck it out the open window, and fired a shot into the air. Come on, boys, get with it, get after me. I didn't

look to see if they followed, but bent over the wheel, still shoving on the horn.

The siren started wailing behind me and I glanced at the rear-view mirror. I saw what I thought was the squad car swerving around a red sedan and racing down the street after me. Let them come; I wanted an army along if I could get it.

The police car helped another way, too. The siren screamed, the sound carrying for miles ahead, and cars pulled to the side of the road clearing a path for the police—and for me. If we made it in time, the sound of the siren getting louder might stop Genova before he . . . finished with Sherry.

I heard a faint crack and something snapped past the car and whirled away through the air. It didn't take much imagination to guess it was a bullet. I should have known. I was having enough trouble keeping this strange buggy on the road. I sure as hell couldn't slow down, much less stop and explain. I had to keep going, and as fast as I could without turning over and ending everything for both Sherry and me. Up ahead was Genova waiting to kill Sherry, or killing her now, and behind were cops shooting at me.

I pressed harder on the accelerator as I neared the train crossing ahead, hoping that hitting the tracks at this speed wouldn't throw the Cad clear off the road. I could see the packing houses at the side of the road now, and even the black-and-white bars down across the highway as they had been this morning.

For a moment I didn't get the significance of the striped wooden bars, then over the wall of the police siren I heard the deeper sound of a train whistle and remembered it had been nearly six p.m. when I'd phoned Sherry, and the late train came through here at six. If it blocked the highway, if I had to stop now, I could take my time going to Sherry; there would be no reason for hurrying. I couldn't stop; I couldn't even hesitate and think about it.

I glanced to my left, then back to the road ahead of me, but I'd seen the train. I couldn't tell how fast it was moving, but it was close, nearly up to the crossing, and the flashing red semaphore signal was clanging off a hundred yards ahead. I had never slackened on the accelerator, but I hung onto the wheel with sweaty hands and shoved my foot even harder against the unyielding floor boards, scared silly. It was almost like being in shock, dazed and unthinking; like watching another car swinging out of traffic and lunging toward you, collision inevitable even as you stared unbelieving. As the whole picture rushed toward me with frightening velocity, I heard the swelling whistle of the train, then the roar and clatter of the tons of metal grinding over steel rails.

I was right on the damn tracks; they were only ten yards ahead and the train engine was already starting across the road. There wasn't a thing I could do about it now. I was either going to make it or I'd never know I hadn't. I yelled at the top of my lungs and swerved my hurtling Cad to the right as much as I dared. The wooden guard rails crashed and splintered across the front of the Cad and crashed shivered in the windshield as the rumble and piercing whistle screamed in my ears and the train's great black mass loomed on my left, thundering down on me.

The impact with the guard rails and tracks threw me forward to the steering wheel and there was a strange, detached moment when there seemed nothing in the world except the bedlam of noise and crashing sounds and blurred black-and-white pictures. Nothing seemed to have color or reality; everything seemed to have stopped for a fragmentary moment, become suspended in the world of screeching clamor that enveloped me. There was no thought or logic or time, nothing



"You'd have to have seen her yourself to understand."

except the reception of violent sensations, all of them blurred and unreal.

It lasted for a moment that was stretched in time, then suddenly the Cad was bouncing and swerving and I thought I'd been hit. I didn't know what had happened until I saw that the car was still racing ahead, right tires skidding in the dirt at the edge of the asphalt pavement. The car swerved, the wheel almost wrenched itself from my hands as I fought it, jerked at it as the car shuddered crazily and then steadied again far over on the left side of the highway.

Even then it was difficult to realize that I'd made it, slipped past the onrushing train, and that the danger of sudden, horrible collision was over. I didn't glance at the rearview mirror. I was hunched over, squinting through a relatively clear space in the cracked windshield. I was almost at the location now, and for the first time it occurred to me that the police car couldn't possibly have followed. I was alone, and if there was anything yet to be done up ahead of me, I was the only one who could do it. There wasn't even the wail of the siren carrying ahead to stop Genova now.

I hit the dirt road and swung into it as I let up on the accelerator, then shoved it down again. At the clearing I saw Sherry's new Ford, the door standing open, the car empty. There was nobody in sight. Obviously Genova would have sent all the others away. I skidded to a stop, got out, and glanced around; then with my gun in my hand I ran into the trees, their shadows lengthened now into almost solid pools of darkness as the sun slipped nearly out of sight behind the horizon. It would soon be night.

I stopped and listened. There wasn't a sound except unfamiliar insect noises and the chirp of crickets. The heavy quietness here in the murky shadows seemed almost to throb against my ears after the noise and rumble and shrill protest of skidding tires of a moment ago. I was still so unnerved and shocked by what had just happened that it was difficult for me to think clearly. I moved farther into the trees with a pulse ticking sootily in my throat, trying to reason, wondering where Genova was with Sherry. There was the lake—any place in the heavy brush, for that matter. A body could lie here undiscovered forever until it crumpled into dust.

Then, with the clammy surge of new panic over my flesh, I suddenly knew where Genova would take her. The cliff where I'd stood this morning, dizzy, looking down the sheer face to the rocks below. The sickening picture flashed through my mind of Sherry wavering on the cliff's edge, Genova hurling her body forward, and the terrified scream bursting from her soft lips as she plummeted downward.

And then she screamed.

The scream split the silence, tore it apart with a cry of infinite terror that seared itself into my brain even as I ran toward it, ran toward the cliff. I ripped through the brush shouting, yelling Genova's name, and roaring curses and obscenities as I reached the last fringe of brush and burst through.

Genova stood on my left, fifteen feet away from me on the cliff's edge, looking in the gathering darkness more like a silhouette than a man. Sherry was another silhouette crumpled at his feet on her hands and knees, shaking her head slowly back and forth.

He had heard me shouting and crashing through the brush toward him and had turned to face me. As he saw me he raised the gun in his hand and fired. Red flame spat toward me and I felt the slap of the bullet as it raked my side. I flipped up my Colt as Genova fired hastily again and missed, then he whirled toward Sherry as she tried to rise to her feet.

I snapped a shot at him, triggered the gun



"That will give you an idea of why the people who built that thing are extinct."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

again as I saw his body jerk. I fired twice more and saw the black splash of bone and blood from his skull as he half lifted his hands and then fell forward like a rag man. He brushed the cliff's edge and then fell over it, falling voiceless and with no sound until his body thudded into the rocks below.

I jumped toward Sherry, pain tearing at my side as I moved, and then I grabbed her, pulled her to me as her eyes rolled back in her head and she went limp.

Minutes later her eyes opened and went wide, then closed again for long seconds. Finally she opened them again and I said, "You're all right, honey. Say hello to me."

She let out a long quivering breath. "Oh golly," she said. "Oh, golly. I didn't guess until he brought me—" she looked around at the cliff's edge a few feet away—"brought me here. I started to run and he grabbed me and I screamed. He hit me." She put a hand to her dark hair. I put my hand there and could feel the dampness where the skin had been gashed. "I didn't go out," she said, "but my legs just went from under me. I thought I was..." She shuddered.

"Forget about it for now, Sherry. It's all over." I looked at her huddled in my arms, her blouse torn half off, a small scratch on her smooth skin.

"Honey," I said, "you look like the gal who was chased by the grebebe."

She looked up at me and finally a small, soft smile curved on her lips. "That's me," she said. "Betty Grebebe."

It was pretty horrible. As a matter of fact, it was almost disgusting. But I didn't care; I knew now that Sherry was all right.

The sirens shrilled and came closer as the last faint glow seemed to fade from the sky. Now they came. I waited till they stopped out where our cars were, then I lifted my gun in the air and pulled the trigger. It went click a couple of times on empty cartridges. Well, the hell with it; the police would find us eventually. I pulled Sherry closer to me. I didn't care if it took them a little while.

I rang the doorbell at the Fanny Hillman residence and waited for Fanny to answer it. I'd spent almost three hours downtown at Homicide, and when I left Oscar Swallow was still talking, his accent getting a mite blurred after admitting his literary piracy and explaining that, months before, Zoe had seen the old copy of *Fanta-Science* on his desk one noon while he was brushing up on his brain picking, flipped through it and commented on his taste in reading, then tossed it back to him. Swallow had hoped she'd forgotten about it, but obviously she hadn't, and had later realized its significance when she became suspicious of him. Also at Homicide I'd identified pictures of my two torpedoes from the jungle, and a call was out on them now.

I heard footsteps thumping toward the door. I was anxious to get this interview over with and out of the way: Sherry was waiting for me at her house, busily queering oranges. Also, this was the last item on my schedule. I'd phoned Bondhelm to inform him somewhat gleefully that even though "Jungle Girl" wasn't yet past the three per cent mark, he had a movie on his hands that was going to require the extraction of healthy sums from his pocket. I knew he'd extract them, however grudgingly, to protect his already large investment, and I was grateful because this meant that, in a way, that Bondhelm was now working for me. Then I called Raul. He was so pleased to learn the mess was cleared up. Oh, yeah. I made him promise faithfully that he would personally recover the celluloid record of my movie debut and hand it to me.

There had been one previous phone call, too, made shortly after the police, one of whom was a friend of mine, found Sherry and me in the jungle. And I was itching to tell Fanny about that one.

The door opened, and Fanny hung her unbelievable puss outside. I hadn't noticed

before, but her complexion looked as if the moths had been at it.

"Why, hi there, Fanny," I said brightly. "What's new?"

She let out a sort of bleat and then said, "What do you want?" She made even that sound nasty.

"Sorry I couldn't get up to your office like I promised," I said. "But I didn't want to bring a dead man to see you."

She blinked at me, closing her eyes and then opening them slowly. It was very much like two moles coming out of their holes. "Dead man?" she said. She was thinking.

"Uh-huh. I came over to tell you about it. O.K.?"

She looked puzzled, but she opened the door and I went inside. She sat down and I noticed that she was still fully dressed except for slippers on her feet. She looked at me, trying to smile, but it was difficult for her because she wasn't used to it. I think she sensed a story. That's what I hope she sensed.

"Well, Mr. Scott," she said, sickening-sweet now. "Dead man? Then you *did* know who it was?"

"I found out. I thought you'd be interested since you made such a to-do about it in your column. Such a pleasant to-do."

One corner of her halfhearted smile slipped nearly to her double chin, but she kept trying. "Tell me about it, Mr. Scott. Shell. Who was it? Was it Raul Evans?"

"Why him?" I didn't wait for an answer but said, "Oh, I'll tell you about it. After you tell me a couple of things. Who tipped you about the beef King and I had? And after I first talked to you, didn't you phone Genova?"

This matter of who phoned whom in the Hollywood gossip garble was almost squared away in my mind now, since I'd learned in talking both to Samson and to Bondhelm that my client's advance info had come from a little lovely whom he'd helped to get a part in the film: bouncing Dot English, who appreciated favors. And repaid them one way or another, or both ways. But I still wanted to clear up that first shot at me and what followed it. I said, "That's all I want, then I'll give you the details. The gory details."

She thought about it for almost a minute. Then she said, "King phoned me himself after the party—actors die without publicity, you know." I didn't mention that it was lying publicity. "About my phoning Genova—well, yes, I did phone him. Just to see if he had anything for my column."

This old blabbermouth had almost been the death of me. I said sweetly, "And did you by any chance just happen to mention that I had the case all wrapped up and was speeding merrily to the D.A.'s?"

"Oh, Mr. Scott. Of course not. How silly. Now tell me, who was it? What happened?"

I wiggled a finger at her. "First, what did you say to Genova, dear?"

She frowned. "Well, I did mention that you seemed very confident. And of course I told him what you'd said to me. Naturally he'd be interested, since it might affect his movie so profoundly."

"Naturally," I said. "He was so naturally interested that he sent a little man out to shoot me. A little man he already had tailing me. Almost got me, too. Isn't that nice?" I managed to laugh, ha-ha. "Yes, indeed. You almost got me killed, dearie. Isn't this fun?"

Her face sagged. "You . . . you mean he—"

"That's what I mean. And—this will kill you, Fanny—a little while after I left you and got shot at, I walked into Genova's office. Probably his little man had already phoned in to say he'd missed me, and I started right in asking Genova embarrassing questions—embarrassing because he'd murdered Zoe Townsend. He was so disappointed to see me still alive that he called in his little man and had him try again at the studio. Isn't this a scream?"

She didn't think it was a scream. I wasn't laughing ha-ha any more, either. I said, "Genova's all mashed up now, lady, and he's got some bullet holes in him that I put there." I talked a little longer. I'd made a deal with this gal, so I gave her the important parts of the story, then turned and went to the door and opened it.

"There it is," I said. "Biggest story Hollywood's had for quite a spell."

She shut her mouth, opened it, her brain cell busy. "Mr. Scott," she called, rising out of her chair. "Is this . . . I mean, could it be—exclusive?"

"Exclusive? The story?" I yanked out the knife she'd left in my back and handed it to her. "Hell, no, lady. If it hadn't been for King's giving you a bunch of wrong dope, and your swallowing it, this little talk *might* have been exclusive." I shook my head. "You know, if I were you I'd be very angry with Douglas King. Mainly because of him you'll be able to read the exclusive Shell Scott story in the *Times*. I phoned it all in, in detail, several hours ago. To Hedda Hopper."

She just plain fell back in her chair.

Maybe King and I weren't too high yet, but I was dying to read what Fanny would have to say about him in tomorrow's *Crier*. I went out. Well, that was off my mind. Now I could concentrate on Sherry.

Sherry opened the door and beamed at me. "All through, darling?"

"All through." She had one of those orange concoctions in her hand. "Where's my drink?" I asked her.

She waved her hand toward the bedroom. "In there."

I followed her into the bedroom and picked up my glass. It was on a little table beside the bed, along with a pitcher of orange juice and a quart of gin. And me a bourbon-and-water man. Oh, well.

I pointed toward the table and grinned at Sherry. "We both need this awful stuff, I think. I'm pretty well banged up, myself, but you're the one who got knocked on the head. Usually it's me." Both of us were doctored, professionally bandaged, and somewhat creaky.

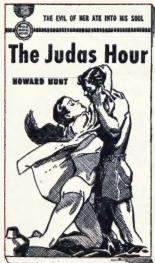
She didn't say anything. She smiled, soft lips sweetly curving, clear blue eyes half closed but merry.

I cleared my throat. Didn't know when I'd been so tired. Really couldn't remember when I'd been so tired. Seemed like I hurt all over. "Yes, sirree," I said. "We're sure banged up, I guess. Practically cripples. Neither of us can move, hardly."

Sherry stepped slowly toward me, put her glass on the little table. I almost forgot to mention it, but she looked wonderful in that old blue robe.

"Oh, I don't know, Shell," she said, smiling. She sighed and put her arms around my neck.

THE END



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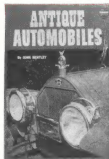
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